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How to Stay Married

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By GEORGE GIBBS

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HOW TO STAY MARRIED
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T O N Y ' S W I F E
THE BLACK STONE
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THE SILENT BATTLE
THE FLAMING SWORD
THE FORBIDDEN WAY
THE SECRET WITNESS
THE MEDUSA EMERALD
THE SPLENDID OUTCAST
THE MAKER OF OPPORTUNITIES

How to Stay Married

BY

George Gibbs



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How to Stay Married

I

BENEDICK AND BEATRICE

1

MARRIAGE, we are told, is an institution ordained by God and therefore to be desired of all men.

We are also told, per contra, that marriage is a mere social convention, quite obviously the invention of the devil.

You may take your choice: upon the one hand, joys unspeakable—upon the other, miseries that come of devices emanating from the mind of a fallen angel.

In a Sunday school in southern Ireland a little girl was asked the question: "What is the sacrament of matrimony?" and her answer was: "It's a state of torment into which some enter to prepare for another, and

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a better, world." Perhaps she was wiser than she knew, for purgatory would be an abode of the blessed when compared to the home of a thoroughly mismated pair. And yet they say that happiness was born a twin, that single man and single woman are only the uncompleted halves of a perfect thing!

The contemplation of this apparent paradox might well alarm many young persons trembling upon the brink of their great adventure, were it not for the fact that young persons in love are not subject to vague alarms or even to the force of horrible examples of matrimonial failure. For if love were not valiant, the family as an institution would soon cease to exist. They prefer, upon the contrary, with the fine optimism of their sentiments, to think of themselves as beings apart from the rest of the world, living in an atmosphere of exaltation far indeed beyond the assaults of the devil or any of his works.

And yet, much as this attitude may be commended, it has its elements of pathos,

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for it is to these fine young lovers that Life often propounds its most difficult problems.

All of which is just a preamble to the statement that, apart from such idealism as this, marriage is a science, just as successful living of any sort is a science—one might almost say an exact science, the laws of which have been proven by the tests of experience.

But the conditions that have come upon the world, largely economic, but more largely social, have made the problem of the young increasingly difficult. There never was a more palpable falsehood than the statement that two can live as cheaply as one, a falsehood that has fortunately deceived few. And so, the young man of moderate means, though sentimentally inclined, spends much of his time eluding the wiles of his feminine acquaintances who, finding the pursuit increasingly difficult, resort to unmaidenly devices, extravagances of artistry, costume, and deportment in the

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effort to capture elusive man. For whether marriage be a failure or not, there are few women who will not dare the risk rather than face the ignominy of that title of spinster, so greatly dreaded.

So, here at the very beginning of the venture is a set of circumstances leading to hasty decisions, to unworthy subterfuges and dishonesties sooner or later to bring proofs of insincerity into the small family of two which has begun its existence on a basic misunderstanding. Nor is the fault the woman's alone, for the young man, no longer a fugitive, becomes that proud creature a husband, expecting in return for the sacrifices of his freedom, unselfish devotion, good cooking, and a knowledge of domestic finance and science far beyond the capacity of the lady of his choice, whose education has been so carefully dedicated to the arts of conquest that she does not know what to do with a husband when she gets him. She is surprised if he is intolerant, and he is intolerant at her surprise. And so their small

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craft drifts toward the reefs which guard the harbor of contentment.

Indeed, as one looks about, the wonder is that so many marriages are even moderately successful. I think it can be stated without denial that no man ever saw a man that he would be willing to marry if he were a woman. And any woman, if questioned closely, would admit without doubt, in any of her sisters, enough flaws of character to make the thought of marriage prohibitive. But luckily for the future of the world, men must marry women, and women, men.

Average success in the venture, then, depends, not upon the qualities that men see in men or women in women but upon that mysterious attraction of one sex for the other, not wholly sexual, which for the lack of an adequate term the world rather vaguely calls love. Love is an elastic word. In the dictionary we find at least seven definitions of it, from its purest and most universal form as the highest conception of God

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and essence of Divinity to a mere admiration or liking; and applied to the marital relation we might, therefore, if we choose, lightly classify the husband with such objects of affection as pretty clothes, caramels, or the *matinée*; and the wife with automobiles, golf, or tobacco.

It will thus be observed, then, that some new definition must be found for the word, a compromise, if you please, keeping intact the fine phrensy of the idealist, and commending itself as well to the practical soul who believes that successful marriage may be a science as well as a sacrament. The definition is not so difficult as it would seem to be, for words suggest themselves almost instantly as synonyms—respect, honor, pride, friendship, consideration—all of these far short of the highest conception already mentioned, and yet all of them, with reasonable reservations, within the reach of all. It will be seen that all of these qualities ignore the sexual relationship, though there is no one of them to which the sex idea is antipa-

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thetic. In marriage sex attraction is an important consideration, but not all important, for it is in the everyday relationships between men and women that their happiness or misery is definitely established. It is in their everyday relationships of the first year of married life—and after—that young people unused to compromises find themselves slowly drifting into misunderstanding and incompatibility. It is here that marriage meets its most difficult tests. For without compromises, without tact, the game is lost. And yet here where an indiscretion may be damning, a moment of tolerance may save a lifetime of happiness.

If misunderstanding leads to incompatibility, incompatibility leads to intolerance and from there on by easy stages to the divorce court. For intolerance is a mirror in which things once beautiful become strangely distorted. The man who murders his wife because she has thick ankles may be a greater rogue in the eyes of the law than the one who divorces his wife because he has

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grown weary of her, but the intolerance is merely one of degree.

It may be said that the murderer has suffered too violent a paroxysm of the artistic temperament, while the other man has nothing whatever to commend him.

There is a story of six shipwrecked men cast ashore with sufficient provisions for their sustenance upon a desert island—two Englishmen, two Scotchmen, and two Irishmen. When rescued some years later, the Scots had formed a Caledonian Society, the Irish were fighting tooth and nail, but the Englishmen had not spoken to each other—for no one had introduced them. And somehow the story suggests the possibilities in the household of the newly married young, thrown upon their own resources and upon each other to work out their own salvation. For the newly married are much more likely to stand upon the dignity of their separately established conclusions and habits and to fight tooth and nail in defense of them than

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to establish, in the clannish spirit, a Caledonian Society.

2

Let us consider then the case of Benedick and Beatrice, cast suddenly upon the isle of matrimony, with no better equipment than a parlor acquaintance of some months, a vague curiosity, and a rather definite wish to make, if possible, a success of the adventure. Let us also assume, for the purposes of our argument, that the affair of Benedick and Beatrice is no mad infatuation of the 'teens, no "puppy" love, to reach its culmination at some convenient Gretna Green braving the parental ire and the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Let us rather think of them as two young people in their twenties already touched by the acid of experience, prudent rather than bold, relinquishing the freedom of bachelordom not without a longing, lingering look behind. Some one has said that men marry because they are bored, women because they are curi-

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ous. Benedick is bored, perhaps, because of the increasing difficulty in keeping his friendships purely platonic. He is a good looking young man (of course) with a fairly good fortune before him if he runs straight and stays home at night and attends strictly to business. If he lives at a boarding house, staying home at night means going to bed or listening to the landlady's daughter sing sentimental ballads in an acidulous soprano. And if he goes out at night, he finds it extremely probable that he will get into mischief and go to work in the morning feeling like a boiled owl. He has always liked Beatrice because she was neither a prude nor a "vamp." She is good looking (of course). She has a pretty feminine way with her and does not sing sentimental ballads. Benedick does not know what love is. He has thought that he has been in love a number of times (rather madly, once or twice) but something has always happened to show him that he has been mistaken. There is a calmness about his regard for Beatrice that gives it a

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different sort of a meaning. His bachelor friends tell him that love is a disease; his employer tells him that love is just friendship magnified; a romantic girl cousin informs him that love is a charm, a fragrance, and a yearning. Benedick is puzzled. Beatrice is charming, she is fragrant. She really is a peach of a girl. You can see by now, he is thinking of Beatrice rather seriously. And then a wise and rather clever aunt advises him not to propose to any girl unless he sees her at ten o'clock in the morning with her hair down and a bad cold in the head. That seems funny. Beatrice *has* a bad cold in the head. He stops at her house one morning and she greets him, blowing her nose. The cold in the head doesn't seem to make any difference. The next night he brings her some flowers. All is well. Propinquity and Beatrice may be trusted to do the rest.

Beatrice, too, is bored perhaps. Or perhaps just curious. She has reached the tremendous age of twenty-two and only last

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week has found one gray hair upon her right temple. She has been in love a number of times, or has thought so, which amounts to much the same thing. But whether in love or no, she has flirted outrageously and refused at least three college boys, one of whom threatened to commit suicide, but took a post-graduate course in medicine instead. There were others—a wealthy red-haired widower of forty with a squint and two children of the awkward age; and a cello player with soulful eyes who, it turned out, had a concealed wife in Michigan. But it is really true that she is thinking seriously. That gray hair is just the first of many that are to come until she looks like Miss Prim, the elderly vestal who gives piano lessons to the little girl who lives next door. She likes Benedick, has even thought sometimes that her feeling for him was something more tender than friendship.

She looks into her mirror again. The cold in her head really makes her look ten years older. She is a fright—and Benedick has

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'phoned that he would stop by the house that morning to leave her a book that she wants. He would want to see her of course. But not like this. . . . She unscrews the lids of various boxes of unguents on her bureau, and begins the restorative and regenerative rites with which all women are familiar.

Benedick *is* nice. She wonders why she has refused to permit herself to think how nice he really is. So thoughtful of him. His flowers are lovely. There seems no doubt now that he is serious in his attentions. And yet why not? She can have him if she wants him—any woman can have any man if she wants him and is clever enough. Beatrice arranges Benedick's flowers very carefully in the bowl upon the mantel, at last putting her face into them.

All this, you will say, is quite conventional and not in the least a grand passion. For the purposes of our argument Benedick and Beatrice must enter the state of matrimony with eyes wide open. And who knows what a grand passion is, unless the mismated

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wives who run off violently with other women's husbands? And if one is going to have that sort of passion what is the use of getting married, when one can have it quite conveniently without benefit of clergy? David conceived a grand passion for the wife of Uriah the Hittite and then spent his old age singing psalms voicing his unwisdom and repentance.

The grand passion, if a yearning, is seldom a fragrance, for sweet smelling things are too delicate to endure in violence.

We will not go to the length of admitting the statement that marriage begins most safely with a little aversion, but it is not unreasonable to believe that friendship and consideration have a durable quality denied both to idealism and to passion. The romantic little cousin of Benedick responsible for the beautiful definition of love is just out of the high school and cherishes a hopeless passion for a motion-picture star with patent-leather hair whose picture, clipped from a magazine, is pasted above her bureau.

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Her affection, you see, is chaste, tender, and sorrowful—based upon the abnegation of sitting in the shadows while her hero makes love, before her eyes, to other women. And so when the engagement of Beatrice and Benedick is announced, she gives the thought of them her pitying smile. What can Benedick know of love—the tender fragrant passion, like hers which knows how to suffer in silence? Why, Benedick hasn't a romantic bone in his body. How can anybody in the advertising business know what love is? And Beatrice! She just knows that she doesn't love Benedick, not in a way that is poetic and beautiful.

But when Beatrice asks her, she agrees, nevertheless, to be one of the bridesmaids and in the excitement of the preparations and in meeting a lovely young man from Benedick's office, even forgets for a while the hero of the patent-leather hair.

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As the wedding day approaches the weeks pass with surprising rapidity and in the excitement of the preparations Beatrice scarcely has time during the day to think of Benedick, who goes about his business with a joyous energy, pleased at the congratulations of his friends (for Beatrice has been very popular) and aware of the fact that he is walking with his chest out and his head high. He has more than a slight feeling of superiority over those unfortunate creatures, his former companions of the evenings, who are not engaged to be married. The older men in the office slap him upon the back and tell him they are glad to hear he is going to settle down. Every one, including those he has not especially liked, seems suddenly to become very fond of him. It is a very pleasant feeling to think that so many are considerate of his welfare.

And so in a sort of glamour the days pass, days of hopefulness and growing affection, touched with splendid moments of intimate

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understanding, while the evenings, delightful evenings in the back parlor of Beatrice's father's house, are spent in delicious plans for the honeymoon and for the future. If in either of them any doubts have arisen as to the serious step that they are taking, those hours in the small back parlor in the evening always remove them. For now something stronger than reason possesses them—the wish for complete possession. If this is not love, it is indeed an excellent imitation. It is Benedick now who is more in love than Beatrice. She is tender but repressive. She wants him to be very much in love with her so that she can be sure on her own account that she is making no mistake. She uses artistry in evading his caresses, if only because she wishes to test his eagerness to win her again and again. It is a pretty game—sexual antagonism the psychologists call it—a heritage from the prehistoric wooing when the woman fought the man until he conquered her and carried her off into the jungle.

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Yes, they are in love. Beatrice acknowledges it, for no man has kissed her—at least as Benedick has kissed her. She no longer thinks of the medical student, or of the financial widower. This is love. She is sure of it—and of him.

As the day of the wedding approaches, Benedick is filled with admiration for the calmness of Beatrice. The wedding dress is lovely. As a tremendous favor he has been taken upstairs to see it. It is a delicate shimmering thing of white with orange blossoms and little white beads and lace. He reaches forward to touch it and two bridesmaids shriek, seizing him violently and thrusting him away. It seems that none but feminine hands may touch so rare a thing. The house is filled with bridesmaids and relatives of Beatrice. He slinks into a corner and reads a magazine. For a week before the wedding day he only catches rare glimpses of her surrounded by admiring females. He is aggrieved. One might think that he had nothing at all to do with the affair. Even Bea-

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trice seems actually to have forgotten his existence. He sulkily smokes a pipe on the front porch with the father of Beatrice and at last goes home.

As he stands at the side of the chancel of the church perspiring freely, and to tell the truth, rather terrified, he wonders why Beatrice has insisted on all this flummery. It would have been so easy to have gone to a minister and been married. But then there wouldn't have been any wedding presents. And Beatrice has thought they might make use of them. But this is the price he is paying for yielding to her acumen. He finds himself thinking of the hideous yellow vase from Beatrice's Uncle William and wondering where they will put it in the new house; of the absurd berry spoons and the three pairs of grape scissors. He has sold his freedom for a mess of grape scissors. He is aware that people are staring at him. A drop of perspiration trickles down his nose, and he is sure that the rebellious lock of hair on top of his head is sticking straight up.

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He feels like a fool and looks it. He glances with a sickly smile at his best man whose frown plainly warns him to buck up.

At last the organ plays and the wedding party comes up the aisle—so slowly that it takes them ages to reach the altar rail—and at last on her father's arm, Beatrice—so calm, so cool, with an air of ease as though she were accustomed to doing this sort of thing every day of the week. She amazes him but the sight of her reassures him curiously. She is really going to be his after all; he hadn't been quite certain about it.

There is something dreadfully unreal about the whole thing—like comic opera. Some high sounding words from a prayer book, a ring, a few phrases and presto! Benedick is a married man. As to the rest, Benedick remembers little. It is all a dream. People he never saw claim him as cousin. Old ladies kiss him. It is all very dreadful. He has a wild impulse to seize Beatrice in his arms and dash through the throng to the first automobile and away. But Beatrice beside

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him, rather queenly, is enjoying it all. It is her day. Her face is slightly flushed and very beautiful, for all women are beautiful on their wedding day. Her veil falls like spray. She looks like a nun glorified with a vision of eternal happiness. Benedick resolves that he will be very good to her. Certainly, he could not begin by abducting her in the midst of such happiness.

Food, toasts, more kisses—one from Beatrice amid applause. The bridal cake is cut, the bouquet thrown and Beatrice goes up to prepare for the wedding journey, while Benedick slinks off, with a gasp of relief, to get into his street clothes.

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And so amid a shower of rice, the symbol of fertility, we see Beatrice and Benedick leave her home. There are old shoes, and bright new kitchen utensils tied with streamers of white satin to the back of the automobile. Pink and white bridesmaids, all aflutter, crowd with flushed ushers into

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other machines in pursuit. But Benedick's best man blocks the narrow way with a lowly flivver and the newly married escape to an unfrequented road, where the wedding decorations are removed and the chauffeur directed to proceed to a railway station. Here they are soon lost in the crowds, and the great adventure is begun.

It is all very beautiful, so beautiful that they both wonder how there could ever have been any doubt about it. Confidences, intimate, secure. Beatrice thinks it extraordinary that she could ever have thought that she cared for any one else. She develops new graces of mind and spirit for Benedick, who kisses her just below the ear and tells her with a perfect sincerity which puts to shame his talents in euphemism as an advertising writer that she is the most wonderful girl in all the world. Benedick who professionally prides himself upon the use of colorful phrases both original and unusual! But Beatrice is not aware of any insufficiency in his style, retorting rather raptur-

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ously that he is the most wonderful man . . . showing thus early a community of interest which augurs auspiciously for the future.

No clouds darken the primrose way of the honeymoon at the seashore—at least until the third day, when Beatrice carelessly remarks upon the beauty of the scene and speaks of the ocean as calm. But she pronounces it *kam*.

“*Karm*, you mean, don’t you?” says Benedick.

She glances at him with an injured air as though he had definitely challenged the authenticity of her education.

“No, I don’t,” she replies rather sharply. “I mean *kam*.”

“But it isn’t pronounced that way, my dear. It’s pronounced *karm*.”

He had not “my deared” her before. If he had said “dearest” orthoepy might have been forgotten. But “my dear” has an ominous sound which seems somehow to partake of the superiority of his manner.

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"Well, that isn't the way *I* pronounce it," she says tartly. "I pronounce it *kam*. So does Dad. And I'm going to keep on pronouncing it *kam*."

"Well, do as you like. But of course you'll be pronouncing it wrong."

"*You* say so. But just because you say so doesn't make it right. Dad had a college education before you were *born*. And I guess he knows."

Benedick smiles but says nothing more. He can afford to smile because he is so sure that he is right. Beatrice doesn't like his smile. She has never known that any one in the world could be so self-assertive without saying anything.

"I know you pride yourself on your English," Beatrice says. "But so do I. And you've got no right to question my pronunciation unless you're sure."

"I *am* sure," Benedick says calmly.

"So am I," Beatrice replies.

Benedick looks out to sea. "Oh, well," he says, "let's say no more about it."

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She examines him furtively in the silences as though he were a creature she had never seen before. What is the use of spoiling so lovely an afternoon by a disagreement over such a trifle? What is the use of his taking such a top-lofty air with her—especially as it is *kam* after all.

Benedick smokes his pipe with a spurious air of contentment. How silly of her to insist when he knows that he is right! Of course it is *karm*.

But the afternoon is spoiled and they reach the hotel speaking of commonplaces like strangers. Beatrice goes to their room. Benedick finds an old dictionary in the hotel office. "*Karm* preferred but *kam* permissible." An old dictionary, a small, ancient, imperfect dictionary. In a generous moment he thinks that he will tell Beatrice. Then decides not to.

But this slight rift in the lute is quickly repaired. There are so many other words quite easily pronounceable, on which they both agree. The unfortunate word is just a

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memory, but it is a memory just the same. What is it that for the moment made them so frankly antagonistic? A month ago, three weeks ago, four days ago, neither would have dreamed of being so dogmatic. Each was putting his best foot forward that the other might observe and admire. It has been so necessary to keep up all the illusions of beatitude. But now—well, the game had been played and possession won. It seems to Beatrice that it would not do to let Benedick begin to be superior and top loftical even about so slight a thing as the pronouncement of a word. That victory won, he might begin the same game with more weighty matters. It seems to Benedick, that though the ancient dictionary, to his great surprise, had given her some rights in the matter, she had shown an acerbity scarcely warranted by the other tokens of her happiness. Women were funny and that was all there was about it.

Fortunately for some days a fine breeze ruffled the sea and a lordly surf sent the

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perate business not to be failed in. Benedick and Beatrice having been married a week, are, of course, old stagers. The sense of desperate happiness has passed and now a period of calm (*kam, karm*) has followed. Beatrice, introspective again, has for a moment, a brief terrible moment, a thought that she is bored. And then glancing at Benedick smoking his pipe, very handsome in his flannels in the sunlight, reflects that this is all merely the reaction from excessive emotion and from the purely personal adulation that she has received from everybody as a bride. Benedick is tremendously contented, reading his paper over his morning coffee, and commenting from time to time upon the world that they have both left so far behind.

"When shall we go to New York for the theaters?" says Beatrice suddenly.

"Oh!" He looks up at her curiously. "Aren't you happy here?"

"Oh, yes, of course, darling. But then there isn't much to do, is there? And these

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spume rolling up to their feet. And when the wind and waves ceased and the sea was smooth, they wisely refrained from comment upon the matter. They had learned something. But when the breeze fell again, to Beatrice the ocean was still *kam*, and to Benedick, *karm*.

5

Of course by this time Benedick and Beatrice insist that such a trifle as the pronunciation of a word shall not interfere with the serious business of being completely happy. Passion has come to them gently and rather beautifully as the sign and seal of their marriage vows.

There are eight other newly married couples in the hotel. Benedick and Beatrice have remarked upon them before. And now—especially with the new arrivals—find many opportunities for amusement. They are so gauche, so obviously new in every respect, so excruciatingly polite to each other, as though the whole thing was rather a des-

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newly married couples are getting on my nerves."

Benedick knocks out his pipe in the general direction of the waste basket, most of the ashes going on the carpet. Beatrice looks at the ashes on the carpet. It isn't *her* carpet so the ashes do not matter a great deal.

"I thought the sea air was doing us both such a lot of good," Benedick says. "You *were* tired, you know."

"Oh, yes. But I'm feeling fine, now. And I did so want to see that new musical show. And it will be so nice to see the shops."

"Shops? Oh! Of course. Let's go then. Nothing to keep us here."

She throws her arms around his neck, kisses him rapturously, then singing, vanishes into the bedroom to pack their trunks. Benedick goes to the office to pay the bill. It is rather a large bill. Benedick has traveled much for his firm and has been esteemed for the smallness of his expense accounts.

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Now he witnesses the curious phenomenon of his expenses just doubled. But he shrugs the thought aside. One doesn't get married every day of the year. Of course in New York they will have to be careful.

They have, of course, been to New York many times. But there is a different kind of a thrill in seeing it thus intimately, together. Beatrice with a fine impulse to frugality suggests going to a cheap hotel, when Benedick informs her that there are no such places in New York and chooses the hotel that he has always used.

Upon the second morning Benedick casually remarks that he thinks that he will go down to the office for a while.

"What office?" asks Beatrice, shocked.

"Our New York office. There were a few loose ends before I left home. And after all, I'll really be getting back into harness in a few days."

"Benedick!"

Her tone of dismay startles him as he stares at her.

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"What?"

"I thought that these three weeks were going to be mine. Of course if you *want* to go—"

He has his arms around her immediately.

"Of course I don't *want* to go. I just thought—"

"What!"

"That—that I could run down there and back before you finished dressing."

"But I'm almost dressed now—"

"Oh!"

"I didn't think you would get bored so soon. And I'd planned such a nice morning."

"Oh, what—?"

"Shopping. I thought we might pick up some things that we shall need for the house."

"But we can buy things at home more cheaply than here."

Beatrice goes to the window and looks into the maze of canyons below her.

"You don't want to go with me," she says

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plaintively. "I feel it. You'd better go to the office. I'll just stay here."

Benedick lights his pipe and smiles determinedly.

"Of course I won't go to the office if you feel that way about it. I didn't *want* to go. I'd much rather be with you. Don't be silly."

"I'm not silly. I'm just—just instinctive. Women guess these things. I had always thought that on a honeymoon—"

She pauses and he waits interested—"that on a honeymoon nobody could think of anything but being happy."

"Haven't you been happy?"

"Yes, yes. But you—you are already talking of business."

"But my business is your business, too, now, isn't it?"

"No—not yet. There oughtn't to be anything but just you and me."

Benedick looks at her quizzically.

"There wasn't until you got so bored at the seashore that you wanted to come to

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New York to see the musical shows," he says quietly.

"Benedick! How could you! I wasn't bored a minute—not a second. But I thought *you* were."

Beatrice, as you see, is slightly disingenuous. She has been so blissfully happy that the first suggestion of an end to her dream gives her an unpleasant sense that it is only a dream after all. The moments of exaltation are passing and, aware of this in her own feelings, seeks to put the burden of proof upon Benedick. But Benedick is wise enough, humorous enough, to meet her with her own weapons. Her reply, she knows, sounds inadequate and so she uses the feminine gesture, always effective with a reasonable man, of throwing her arms about his neck and kissing him.

These conversations are typical of waning honeymoons. They are, you might say, like the first faint announcements by the violins and cellos in an orchestra of an important and persistent motive in a symphony or an

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opera. But it is in an allegro movement, light, gentle, and half jocular, with chords made from the full-tone scale resolving rather beautifully into concord at the end. The "dissentient" motive it might be called and only ominous when considered with reference to its potential future possibilities in the wood-wind, the brass, and the tympani. One might expand these conversations endlessly introducing at once the bassoons and the horns, which would only make a slightly greater noise and be little more significant, since the "reconciliation" motive usually follows, quickly ending in the sibilance of a kiss. But the basses and the bassoons will be needed later, when Benedick, exasperated or unreasoning, finds his voice but loses his temper, at the complaining or plaintive note of the oboe. It is not yet time for the *scherzo*.

One might, for instance, speak of the visit to the shops, where Beatrice looks longingly at things that she may not buy and Benedick, in the background, wearing the fixed

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smile of determined amiability, watches his beloved fingering the costly stuffs or admiring the Japanese lamps ("just the thing for the table in the living hall"), the rugs, the pictures, the bric-à-brac worth the ransom of a Wall Street broker, but far beyond the modest salary (and commission) of a fair-average advertising man.

For Beatrice, you see, because of the liberality of her parents and the freedom of her youth knows little, really, as to the value of money. Money was ugly green paper for which one got things that one thought one wanted. Therefore, the hundred dollars given her by her grandmother is burning a hole in her pocketbook. There is a brown velvet jacket that she wants to buy for Benedick, a wonderful affair with quilted cuffs that would go so adorably with his brown eyes. But Benedick, who has made his way alone in the world since he has come out of high school, shows an open scorn for such an article of luxury. He thinks his old blanket-cloth wrapper is good enough for

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him. He would have liked to show gratitude for Beatrice's thought, but he doesn't know how. So Beatrice buys a satin kimono of pink prettily embroidered with flying birds and cherry blossoms. There is symbolism here, and Benedick smiles as Beatrice takes the package proudly under her arm.

"Why is it," he asks when they mingle with the crowd on the Avenue, "that they always embroider storks on kimonos? Is it because . . .?"

"Hush, Benedick, hush!" says Beatrice, blushing furiously.

But her money is spent, or most of it, and she is very happy because she will not have to worry about *that* any more.

Benedick is really more in love with her than ever, for she seems so like a child with her new toy, but in the back of his mind is the thought that she must soon come definitely face to face with the purchasing power of the dollars that he will provide. She has been spoiled, Benedick knows, as

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all American girls are spoiled by adoring and indulgent parents. Beatrice is not spoiled so much as to be selfish, nor is she naturally extravagant. And what should she know about money when no one has taken the serious trouble to advise her? Nevertheless, Benedick is aware of some anxious moments as he walks back to the hotel beside her, thinking of the rather large sums of money that he has been spending; and at odd moments impressed as never before by the arithmetical certainty of twice one being two.

That night, in order to curtail expenses, he suggests instead of the theater a motion picture show. She assents amiably, of course, but thoughtfully. He wonders what she is thinking. She is thinking, she says, how few days are left them of the honeymoon. But she is really wondering whether Benedick is going to turn out to be parsimonious or just prudent.

But she loves him—she is sure of that—he, her. She believes in herself and in him,

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believes, too, in her power to make their married life whatever she wishes. It is a very beautiful world, and she hasn't a single regret. All is well. She likes being married and she is going to stay married to Benedict until her life's end.

II
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1

THE bridegroom feels himself expected, in justice to the lady of his choice, to give her at once everything to which she has been accustomed. And seek as he will he will find little encouragement from her near relatives to warrant him in subjecting her to the mild hardships that he himself might be quite willing to endure. "Beatrice will get along," they say. "She is a fine girl and very adaptable. But of course we know that you wouldn't want her to be a mere household drudge. You want her to be beautiful for yourself as well as for the world; and she always had such pretty hands."

Some such phrases are inevitable even from loving parents who have themselves

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attained their prosperity from very small beginnings. "She always had such pretty hands," says mamma-in-law, quite forgetful of the fact that her own hands had once been quite as pretty as Beatrice's, and that she had soon discovered that hands were intended for useful purposes. It is this kind of snobbishness, born of pride in the finished product of modernity, that she is handing into Benedick's keeping, which permeates the beginnings of the married life of the new pair. Beatrice must have this and that. For Beatrice's friends, Henrietta Brown and Georgiana Smith, who were married last year, have managed to get them somehow.

If it is not mamma-in-law who advances these suggestions, then it is Aunt Sarah or Cousin Kate. But whether Beatrice's mother says them or not, Benedick at least knows that she is thinking them. He is very fond of mamma-in-law in spite of the slight differences of opinion that have arisen between them, for he believes that she has

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and that she has made a great sacrifice in giving up to him her only daughter. But during the early days in the new house while enduring the visits of Beatrice's family, Benedick feels like the Arabian bridegroom of upper Egypt, who must undergo, according to Westermarck, an ordeal of whipping by the relatives of his bride, given, in order to test his courage. And he must receive the chastisement, sometimes exceedingly severe, with an expression of enjoyment—for this is the custom of the country. So Benedick smiles determinedly, trying to believe that his mother-in-law is not unreasonable, watching, meanwhile, with a dubious eye, the figures mounting upon the debit sheet of his domestic ledger. He is beginning to realize that the mother-in-law joke, ancient as it is, is not so much of a joke after all. Like Beatrice upon the honeymoon, her characteristics have, ever so slightly, changed. There is a subtle note of proprietorship in her suggestions which does not escape him.

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Perhaps he is a trifle sensitive as to his rights or insistent upon a preconceived notion that he and Beatrice would do much better working out their domestic problems alone. But curiously enough, in spite of the many talks that he and Beatrice have had upon the subject, he finds his bride only too willing to listen to her experienced mother and to adopt without question many of her ideas.

Of course mamma-in-law is not intrusive. She is too wise to be that, for she is a very tactful person. She always ends her remarks by a question. "I think it would be nice if you did so and so. Don't you?" But as Beatrice usually agrees with her, it is easily to be seen that the questions are merely addressed to him by courtesy and have no meaning whatever. So Benedick, rather peevishly, at last retires to his newspaper and evening pipe, awaiting the intimate moment when he can definitely speak to Beatrice about what they may, or may not, do.

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Even the best of mothers-in-law is tainted with a mild form of *materno-mania*. If she has never thought of being a materno-maniac before, she becomes a victim of the dreadful disease as soon as her daughter has been brought safely home from the wedding journey. There is something about the new house with the new pair in it that excites her strangely. She is a materno-maniac perhaps because she is merely the best of mothers-in-law. The old joke made in ancient Chaldea is not without its philosophy, for a little matter of six thousand years could make no possible difference in the intrinsic qualities of mother love suddenly violated by the theft of a daughter by a person who has only enjoyed her acquaintance for a few short months. The maternal mania is no bad thing if properly directed. Mamma-in-law is likely to forget that for twenty-two years she has had the opportunity to bring her daughter up under the shadow of her wing, to be her own reflection, if she pleases, a practical creature,

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well mannered, domestic, preserving at the same time by judicious mingling with the world, the charms and attractions of her youth. The kernel in the nut that Benedick has to crack is that mamma-in-law has not done so. For Beatrice has been permitted every license of the age in which she lives, only preserving herself from the perils to which other young women fall victims by an innate delicacy and sense of decency which neither jazz nor petting parties can corrupt. What she is is not what mamma-in-law has made her, but what she has saved of herself.

Beatrice's marriage, then, has caused a recurrence of this insidious disease in her mother. Beatrice needs her now, really needs her, she believes, to bring order and system into the new house, to cope with the problems of housecleaning, ordering, cookery; the treacherous designs of the grocer, the wiles of the vegetable man. For Beatrice, though a nice girl with pretty hands, knows nothing of these things. Mamma-in-

law's materno-mania has stopped at the kitchen door. It has always seemed such a pity to bother Beatrice with practical considerations, when she was reflecting so much credit upon the family by the attention she received and by her general popularity among the nicer kind of people. God forbid that Beatrice should learn how to cook, while it was possible for her to associate with the nicer kind of people—"nicer" people in every way, as a matter of fact, than those with whom Beatrice's mother had been intimate when she was a young girl. Instead of teaching Beatrice how to cook, she has rather jocularly told her that if she didn't know how to cook, she would never have to.

But mamma-in-law has no sense whatever of any educational deficiencies of her daughter. Beatrice has gone, she knows, through the high school with honors, and has even won a prize (a copy of Browning's *Ring and the Book*) for an essay on *Pride and Prejudice* by Miss Jane Austen, showing thereby a culture that leaves nothing to be

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desired. Mamma-in-law has always had a notion that so accomplished and beautiful a creature could marry nothing less than a doting millionaire whose wife would have no need for culinary or other domestic wisdom. So she has just put off the training of her daughter in the essentials of a practical life, trusting to her natural cleverness (and her mother's advice) to meet the situation when it should arise.

Why is it that sensible women expect a miracle of clairvoyance on the part of their daughters to achieve a knowledge that has taken their mothers years to acquire? So Benedick, examining the kernel of the nut that he has cracked, asks himself, rather curiously, this question, and determines if he ever becomes a very wealthy man, to endow a chair in a leading University to propagate wisdom in the things that young wives should know; to educate them for the profession of matrimony, which, he decides, should be just as much a profession as medicine, the law or any other old thing that

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modern women want to obtain. The chair would be the Chair of Domestic Science which would give a degree of D.D.E., Doctor of Domestic Economics, and another degree with a higher spiritual significance of P.W.M., Potential Wife and Mother.

But by this time he loves Beatrice for the things that she is not, and decides that with the new incentive of home and wife he will be much more clever at the office, much more industrious and so make more money to support his beloved in a fitting way. After all, eleven dollars a week (the wages of the much discussed cook) is not such a great sum. Before he met Beatrice he was in the habit of spending more than that amount weekly on theaters and cigars. He and Beatrice will eliminate the theater for a while, and Benedick will smoke his pipe.

2

And so at last they are installed in the new home, the smallest house that can be

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possibly imagined outside of the covers of a fairy book. Benedick rents it from the owner with an option to purchase at the end of a year if everything is satisfactory. It is in the suburbs—a detached house, one of a row, each looking exactly like the others—so exactly that in the beginning Benedick and Beatrice have to count from the end to be sure that they are not invading the privacy of Mrs. Silotti, whose husband is in the fruitery business in town, or of Mr. McGahan, the local political celebrity. But soon certain distinguishing marks—the geraniums that Beatrice has set out, the box hammock, the green wicker chair (like Georgiana Smith's), the yellow curtains in the living hall—make them so certain of their habitation that they can find it in the middle of the night with their eyes closed. For all of these things have a personality now, Beatrice's personality, and Benedick's. These are no longer matters of dollars and cents as they were a few weeks ago, but household gods, and properly worshiped

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as such. There is a thrill for Benedick in the mere act of opening the door with his latch-key, for he enters upon a new empire—his own, and the empress, answering his whistle, comes down to greet him. It is all very wonderful. There is no cloud in the sky worthy of the name, just little specks no bigger than your hand—small domestic tragedies, like the breaking of one of Cousin Kate's dinner set, or some deficiency of the vacuum cleaner—specks that have brought a tiny pucker to Beatrice's brow only to vanish like smoke before Benedick's breezy optimism. She loves him to come home at night, just as she likes him to go away in the morning so that she can have the day to work and to study, uninterrupted, her domestic problems.

Every bride begins at once using her wedding-gift china for everyday use. No one thinks to tell her that this is a dangerous proceeding with a new two-handed cook in the house to whom frying pans and French porcelain are merely cousins-german. It

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has been a mistake, says Beatrice with belated wisdom, to begin using all the handsome china. Mother says so too. They ought to have a cheap set to use every day—just ordinary china, so pretty, with little pink rosebuds—and so very inexpensive. *Can't* she get them?

Benedick frowns. He recalls the agonizing moment at the altar that bought for them both those wedding gifts. He doesn't quite see financial daylight after the expenses of the honeymoon—but of course it won't do to break anything of Cousin Kate's unless perhaps her head, but he doesn't say that to Beatrice, who has not been sensitive to Cousin Kate's unhappy faculty of suggesting things both unessential and expensive. So Benedick says he'll see about it.

They have both forgotten their unhappy discussion about the pronunciation of the word calm. Benedick at the office has looked it up in a large, modern, and unabridged dictionary and found by the latest usage that

he—not Beatrice—is right. But magnanimous, he says nothing more about it.

There are to be other disagreements, however, ending quite unspeakably in quarrels. For this, we are told, is merely the way of true love, and lovers who do not quarrel miss all the delights of reconciliation. By this it is not intended that newly married pairs should seek disagreements in order to experience these delights, for that is a dangerous game, sometimes practiced by the young wife seeking excitement and often ends in misunderstandings which may be irreparable. But genuine disagreements are signs of character without which one may be certain that one party to the marriage contract is lacking either in ideas or in courage, and is doomed to a kind of moral or spiritual subservience to the other—a relationship that leads to trouble, unless the stronger being, whether man or woman, has a keen sense of justice and a fine nobility of spirit. Dr. Hardy tells a story of a newly married pair so gentle to each other and so polite,

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that the man who was fond of the "drumstick" of a chicken gave his wife that part for a year with great self-abnegation before he discovered that she was fond of the breast.

But Benedick and Beatrice, being persons of equal spirit, character, and intelligence are doomed to quarrel. The quarrel happens suddenly before either of them is aware. If they had known that it was imminent, they would have prepared themselves stoically to meet each other in a state of philosophical composure. But in marriage there is never time to "beware of entrance to a quarrel." There is no entrance to a quarrel: you are in it before you are aware—often not even aware until some fatal damage has been done.

Domestic broils may be classified: the Disagreement Amicable; the Disagreement Positive; the Duel Ironic, and the Riot. Some marriages quite comfortably survive all of these tests of affection, but few successful ones can long endure a repetition of more than the first three. For the thin, cool

blade of irony in skillful hands is a more dangerous weapon even than the bludgeon.

The first quarrel of Benedick and Beatrice, curiously enough, is brought about by the breaking of another plate of Cousin Kate's dinner set. Benedick has had a hard day in the city and has spent the entire afternoon away from the office, trying to convince a recalcitrant client that the advertising campaign in behalf of certain Indestructible Underwear has been planned by Benedick with the dignity and acumen that such useful articles deserve. Benedick has been working very hard writing copy and devising, with the help of an advertising artist, a series of cuts showing individuals in all sorts of acrobatic attitudes, producing unheard of strains, capably resisted by the famous wearing apparel. This is a valuable "account" to his firm and the returns in commissions large. But the manufacturer has found flaws in Benedick's plan and has, quite unexpectedly, advanced some ideas of his own. The mere fact that Benedick be-

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lieves the manufacturer's ideas to be wrong, his own right, has nothing to do with the situation which threatens the failure of the deal, and Benedick's own reputation as a man who succeeds in his undertakings.

So Benedick is not in a pleasant humor as he gets down upon the station platform and walks homeward. He has had days like this before, but never when so much depended upon them, for he has Beatrice to think of now. Dear old Bee! The thought of her waiting for him in the little home revives his drooping spirits and he increases, joyfully, the length of his stride, turning into the familiar street, ready with a smile for Beatrice when his latchkey opens the door. But as he comes near the house, he sees that the windows of the kitchen and pantry are open and that smoke in perceptible quantities is coming from them. Then for the first time he has a scent of something burning. He rushes anxiously up the walk and into the house. Something *is* burning.

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In the kitchen he finds Beatrice sitting dejectedly in the corner, her eyelids inflamed and yielding to paroxysms of coughing. Upon the gas range, still giving forth both smoke and stench, is a round pan containing a brown mass of something quite indistinguishable.

"What—what is it, Bee? I thought the house was afire."

"Where were you?" says Beatrice. "I've been trying to get you at the office all the afternoon."

"I was out. But what's happened? Where is Susan?"

"The cook," says Beatrice, with dignity, "has left."

"Why?"

"I sent her away. She broke another plate of Cousin Kate's dinner set this morning."

Beatrice's calmness is ominous, but Benedick is unaware of it.

Susan gone! This is tragic.

"And you! What has happened?"

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Beatrice rises: "I was t-trying to make a c-cake," she says.

"Cake!" He stares impotently at the malodorous mess. "What on earth—!" he begins to exclaim, when the voice of Beatrice breaks.

"I thought we'd have some s-soup, some eggs, and some jam. And I thought I'd make a c-cake."

Benedick at this point should have said something. Instead of doing so, as though fascinated, he stares at the horrid mess.

"I—I just went upstairs to finish doing the b-bath room. I w-wasn't gone long when t-this thing happened. I r-rushed down but it was t-too late. The oven was t-too hot, I guess. I—I burnt my f-fingers too."

"How damned silly!" says Benedick.

It is heartless of him, but in the background of his mind still lurks the image of the intolerant manufacturer of Indestructible Underwear. It is to this person Benedick's voice is still speaking, not to Beatrice.

"How damned silly!" He realizes that he has been heartless after the words have passed his lips.

But there is no time to correct them, for the slumbering storm in Beatrice's breast breaks suddenly.

"Silly—yes, damned silly," suddenly cries Beatrice hysterically. "Don't stand staring at the Thing like that. You're cruel, unfeeling! And it's absolutely all your fault!"

"My fault!"

"Yes, y-yours. I wouldn't have had to c-cook if the cook hadn't gone. The c-cook wouldn't have gone if she hadn't broken Cousin K-Kate's dinner plate. Cousin Kate's dinner plate wouldn't have been broken if you'd b-bought the chean set I asked you for!"

All this in a high crescendo. The chain of logic seems quite impregnable to Beatrice. Benedick takes his gaze from the Thing and stares at her in wonder.

"Beatrice!" he begins calmly; but she

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only throws him a terrible glance, then bursts into violent tears and flies from his presence—upstairs to her own room.

Benedick whistles tenuously. Then puts his hand in his coat pocket searching for the pipe of peace and consolation. The end of a perfect day! He fills and lights his pipe deliberately, then gazes around the kitchen at the mess Beatrice has made of things—the spilled flour, the stained pages of the cook book, the litter of spoons of various sorts, the soiled yellow crucible of Beatrice's unfortunate venture. And upon the small dresser the broken pieces of Cousin Kate's dinner plate. Curiously he picks them up and examines them with the eye of a connoisseur in the beautiful. Too bad! Damn the cook anyway. Let her go. He would get another cook—a better one.

He takes a soiled spoon and thoughtfully scrapes at the brown mess in the round pan and puts it into the slop pail on the back porch. Then returns to survey this portion of his rebellious empire.

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Marriage as a profession? Why not? Imagine practicing surgery with a kit full of instruments without a knowledge of probe or forceps; or medicine with a sheaf of prescription blanks and no *materia-medica*; or the law without knowing the difference between a mortgage and a summons! And yet, he realizes, that he and Beatrice have ventured blindly into the profession of marriage, without the slightest knowledge of the technique of the game. They are like children playing with a stick of dynamite. What a mess! Poor Beatrice. She has tried so hard and he has not been guiltless of the explosion. He should not have spoken so unfeelingly in the midst of her failure and disappointment. He has been brutal. He glares resentfully at the soup pot, the lid of which is lifting gently, quite undisturbed by the scene of havoc, and emitting an appetizing odor. Soup! All is not lost. He takes the soiled dishes to the sink, puts them in the dishpan, turning on the hot water, then sets things in order in a

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crude, masculine way, going at last up the stairs to the door of their room.

There is no sound. He enters. Beatrice is lying on the sofa, her head in her arms. Poor dear! Her handkerchief is crumpled into a neat moist ball.

"Bee darling—" he whispers, touching her shoulder gently.

She stirs a little, but says nothing.

"I'm sorry. I was a brute. Can you forgive me?"

"Oh, how *could* you, when I tried so hard!" She murmurs to the sofa cushion.

"Bee, dear, you must forgive me this time. Everything's gone wrong all day. I took it out on you."

She straightens a little and turns, her handkerchief to her eyes.

"It doesn't m-matter."

"Yes, it does matter. I said you were damned silly. I was rotten to you—after you'd burnt your fingers too. Which fingers were they, darling?"

He takes her hand and finds after minute

examination a very small blister. This he kisses.

"It was all on account of that damned Indestructible Underwear. I've been working on that account for a month—and to have old Mac Hinery turn down my copy at the last moment!"

She is sitting bolt upright now, her hand in his, interested, resentful.

"He did that! Oh, Benny . . ."

"I was swearing at *him*—not you, Bee."

"Poor Benny, I forgive you. But I wasn't damned silly, was I?"

"No, no, no."

"I *was* afraid when all that smoke poured out that the fire department might come, and everybody would know what a failure I'd made."

"You poor child! What sort of a cake were you try—going to make?"

"You'll laugh at me, Benny, The name in the cook book was so suggestive, so symbolic. I was trying to make an angel cake, Benny."

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"Then it ought to have come out. Because that's what you are—an angel."

Their lips meet. The joys of life always seem much greater when placed in direct contrast to pain. To Benedick and Beatrice it seems almost worthwhile to have had this misunderstanding if only to show them both how much they love each other.

"Come," says Benedick, "we'll go into town for dinner and the theater."

"But—the kitchen—the soup."

"Damn the kitchen. Damn the soup. We'll get a real cook to-morrow."

Benedick goes to the next room—used as his dressing room—to get into evening clothes, for not yet has he ceased the formal habits of the hotel life of his honeymoon. As he is tying his cravat, he hears Beatrice's voice through the open door.

"I *do* think though, Benny, that we'd better get that set of china. Don't you?"

He smiles at his image in the glass.

"Yes, Bee. I think we'd better," he replies.

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And so the clouds once beginning to roll away, clear the heavens completely, for just as they are getting ready to leave the house the 'phone bell rings. It is Mac Hinery.

"I've been thinking over that copy we were discussing this afternoon. It's O. K., Benedick. We'll go ahead on it tomorrow."

3

But these misunderstandings, tragic as they may seem, are but trivial incidents in the comedy of marriage, for they are safely objective and so obvious that any child would be aware that they must end in reconciliation. It is the subjective misunderstanding that is more dangerous—the fancied wrong that is treasured in the heart for days unspoken or unwept, and perhaps, because it is never condoned or even explained, fades at last into a dim perspective, forgotten for the moment, but distantly present to be recalled in an angry or ironic moment. This subjective misunderstand-

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ing is a growth of time and rarely occurs with any fatal results in the first months of marriage.

Having thus given an example of the kind of amusing by-play which comes of the objective quarrel, we will now approach the more subtle question of the subjective. For this, it will be discovered, is deeply rooted in the essential differences in constitution, instincts and education of the young male and female human animals. The times have made some change in methods of education, but even when the last word is said, the tradition still holds that girls should continue to grow up in glass houses and that boys, like hardy perennials, are to depend upon the elements and the soil of the garden. If girls now and then take the law into their own hands and choose to venture out of doors they are still likely to find the conditions difficult, and to lose in the growing some delicate quality of grace, color, or perfume. The plant accustomed to the conservatory may endure in boisterous airs, but

the chances are that it will grow stunted or weedy.

The root of misunderstanding lies in the essential difference then, between men and women, which begins with the difference between boys and girls. From the cradle, girls imbibe one set of ideals, boys another. Boys learn from boys, and girls from girls, and so the traditions are handed on from one generation to the next. The boy looks with contempt upon the pretty feminine tricks of his sister. And the girl meditates with scarcely concealed disgust upon the small masculine vices of her brother. He thinks it very fine to chew tobacco (even though it make him ill) and to make rude jokes, estimating the frivolity of powdering the nose or rolling down the stockings from the rugged eminence of his masculinity. As he grows older, his vices differ only in degree. The personal habits that she esteems as feminine virtues are mere petty vices to him. And his liberal views of his prerogatives in life are thought of by her as monstrous. She learns

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that all men are by nature beasts, just as all women are angels. He believes that all girls are silly and that men (like himself) are wise beyond their understanding.

With mild concessions here and there, this is the general attitude of antagonism—until the mating time when an extraordinary revulsion takes place, both of feeling and opinion. Here, says the girl, is surely the exception to the rule. The vices, which she has so long held in abhorrence, seem by some curious alchemy of sentiment to be transmuted into pure gold, or at the least into some metal no longer base. And strangely enough, to the boy, those very tricks of the feminine technique so silly in his sister, become endowed with a subtle charm never before observed. He notices that girls with shiny noses are not in the least like the object of his adoration. And, moreover, that high heels, fluffy hair, vanity boxes, sachet, exotic ornaments and the like are a part of the feminine paraphernalia without which something of a girl's charm is indeed lost.

These illusions continue into the married state, made even more alluring by the novelty of the new intimacy. But the inherited traits continue. Beatrice continues to be a woman, Benedick a man. The intolerance of Beatrice's ideals for Benedick's may be diminished, but the germ has never been nor will ever be destroyed. And Benedick, awake at last to a great light, tries to see the beauty of virtue as he sees it in Beatrice, though still aware, somewhere in his cerebellum, of a recurrence of the boy concept, that women are really unreasonable creatures after all.

The subjective misunderstanding of a man and woman, then, is inherent, based upon the intrinsic qualities of each, which differ as do their bodies. Each have hands and feet, legs and arms, but there the analogy ceases, for the minds of each are differently motivated. A woman thinks with her feelings, a man with his prejudices. And between the two of them unless they be circumspect, they may play the devil with hap-

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piness. For it is the little reticences of early married life that lay the foundations of a lasting contentment.

4

The misunderstanding between Beatrice and Benedick over the unfortunate affair of the angel cake is a matter of twenty minutes. The misunderstanding about Uncle William's yellow vase lasts for weeks. It is subjective: a matter of personal pride to Beatrice, who is devoted to her Uncle William, a matter of personal honor to Benedick, who holds his own artistic taste in high esteem. The jar is hideous and huge, of yellow, belonging to none of the patrician families of Ceramics—a hybrid, dreadful object, decorated with a distorted dragon, snake, or alligator with red eyes and scales of gold. It has cost a great deal of money. That has been obvious from the first and the cost has complicated the problem. For when the wedding presents are at last unpacked, Beatrice puts it in a place of honor

upon the mantelshelf of the living hall, thus violating the color scheme of the room and Benedick's artistic sense, which sees in the gift of Uncle William a profanation of the shrine dedicated by himself with such precious pains and expense to love and beauty. Because it is Uncle William's gift Beatrice refuses to believe that it is as ugly as Benedick says it is. Uncle William is her mother's own brother, her favorite uncle, and well to do. To put the yellow vase in a less conspicuous place would offend Uncle William—mortally.

"But it offends *me* mortally," says Benedick mildly, "by staying there."

"What nonsense, Benny! It's really quite a good spot of color."

"But it doesn't go with anything in the room. See."

Benedick strides to the mantel, takes the object down and holds it behind his back. "See," he says, "don't you see what I mean?"

"No," says Beatrice firmly, as she takes the vase from his hands. "I'm sure the man-

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tel looks bare without it. And besides—” This with the fatal sophistry of one who thinks with her feelings—“besides Uncle William expects it to be there.”

“How?”

“Mother told him that that was where we were going to put it.”

Benedick groans.

“But this is *our* house, not theirs.”

“Yes, *our* home. Mine as well as yours, and I like it there.”

And so with an air of closing the discussion she goes out of the room and upstairs.

Benedick stands smoking for a while and then noiselessly, like a thief with designs upon the silver, removes the yellow vase to a less conspicuous place upon a table in a corner, replacing it with a Chinese bowl, a thing of real beauty, the gift of his best man.

It is not until they return from a visit in the neighborhood late in the evening that Beatrice notices the changes that he has made. Benedick is hanging up his hat. She stares at his back reproachfully.

"Benedick!"

The strident tone does not surprise him in the least. He has been surprised that Beatrice's sharp eyes have not made the discovery earlier.

He turns toward her, grinning, as she reproaches him.

"You moved Uncle William's vase!"

"Oh, did I?"

"Yes, you did."

"I probably forgot to put it back. How careless of me."

"I'm awfully disappointed in you, Benny—not to be more considerate of my feelings."

She pounces upon the Chinese bowl with ravishing hands and quickly makes the exchange.

"I *want* it there. Don't you understand?" she says, rather sharply.

Benedick shrugs and goes about locking the windows. Beatrice waits, standing guard until he has gone up the stairs and then follows.

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The next evening as she comes down to dinner she notices that the substitution has been made again. Benedick is waiting in the dining room. She changes the objects, and comes to the dinner table in frowning silence. Benedick converses amiably. It is not until some moments have passed that Benedick notices her abstraction.

"What's the matter, Bee?"

She gazes at her soup dish speaking in a suppressed voice.

"You changed Uncle William's vase again."

"Oh. Is *that* it?"

"Yes, it is. You want to do just as you please in this house, without considering my wishes at all. You *know* where I want uncle William's vase, and yet you keep moving it away."

"But, my dear—"

"We won't discuss it—except to say that if you move it again I'll have nothing to do with you."

Dreadful threat! Benedick finishes his

soup thoughtfully. Then resumes the conversation as though nothing had happened. But Beatrice is silent throughout the meal, or answers merely in monosyllables. It is at this meal that Benedick learns for the first time that a woman is never so declamatory as when she is holding her tongue.

But the game, begun in all the seriousness of two conflicting ideas, has apparently ceased being a game. It is now a contest. Some dogma seems to be invoked in the notion of Beatrice to have her own way. But a good dinner makes Benedick generous. Domestic principles, involving significant matters, are frequently dismissed by the correct operation of the digestive tract. Beatrice wants her own way. Let her have it. All the hideous yellow vases that Uncle William can buy are not worth a single corrugation upon Beatrice's smooth white brow. With the chops the incident becomes unimportant, with the coffee, it is forgotten. Throughout the evening Beatrice wears a placid expression for she knows that her first

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declaration of supremacy has been successful.

Everything goes well for a fortnight, when Benedick, unduly oppressed by the yellow vase as he comes into the house, stands for a moment, staring at it in a new, direful moment. The hideous gilt dragon has captured in its scales a last ray of the setting sun, and the evil red eyes of the monster defy him. He closes the door behind him, hangs up his hat in the closet, and yields to temptation.

He has taken the vase in his hands and is halfway to the corner table when Beatrice, who has been hopefully awaiting his return, rushes precipitantly down the steps, indignation suddenly flaming.

"Benedick! what are you doing?"

He stops and turns sheepishly. He is caught.

"Oh, Bee," he says with a laugh, "what does it matter!"

But she reaches him, laying violent hands upon the yellow vase. The red eyes of the

dragon gleam ironically as she seizes it. And then—

Something goes wrong with Beatrice's pretty hands, for the dragon slips from her grasp. There is a crash as the yellow vase strikes the wooden floor, its fragments shooting in all directions, like exploding shrapnels. And like the apparent hush following an exploding shell, a silence more significant than any Benedick remembers, even in France, where havoc always followed.

There is nothing like the crash of crockery to begin or to end a quarrel. He is intently aware of Beatrice staring down at the broken fragments in a sort of coma. One red eye of the dragon on a broken piece looks up at him reproachfully as though to say, "Just look what you've done—" Apprehensively, as though to say, "Kick me if you like, I'm done for." But Beatrice says nothing. All of her pent forces are gathering for a concerted outburst.

"It's broken," says Benedick dully at last, as though making a discovery.

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Still she does not speak, but he dares to look at her and sees that she is trembling. At this fatal moment he touches her gently on the arm. It is this touch, like the contact with the wand of some evil fairy, which transforms her into a being he knows not.

"You!" she flings at him, "*You!* You broke it. It's all your fault. If you'd let it alone this never would have happened."

"*I* broke it?" he asks, aware that the object has been in her hands when it has fallen.

"Yes, you. You wanted me to break it; you hoped I'd drop it. You've always hated it—from the beginning. Now I hope you're satisfied."

"I—I'm sorry," he says. "But isn't it a little unfair of you?"

"Unfair! You dare say I'm unfair?"

She turns away from him. "I hate you, I loathe you. I abominate you—don't touch me!"

And then, her vocabulary of anathema suddenly exhausted, she bursts into violent sobbing.

Benedick, for want of something better to do, stares idiotically at the broken china. It is an ingenious man who knows how to deal with a woman's tears. Beatrice has never sobbed like that before. This is serious. He goes down upon his knees gathering up the fragments, placing them skillfully one inside of the other like Japanese boxes. Some of the pieces have flown under distant objects of furniture, where they coyly elude him. He retrieves them one by one. It is a sort of game distracting for the moment, deadening the sounds of Beatrice's sobs from the couch.

"Beatrice dear, I'm terribly sorry," he says at last. "Terribly."

No sound from the couch—not even sobs now. He stands looking at her helplessly. She seems smaller than he had thought her and rather piteous, he thinks, but he does not even dare to touch her. He has his pride too.

"Uncle W-William will n-never forgive you," she manages at last.

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He marks the personal pronoun, but ignores it.

"Accidents will happen." He delivers this remark triumphantly as though discovering a phrase never used before.

"It oughtn't to have happened. It wouldn't have happened if you hadn't interfered."

He shrugs. "Oh, very well. But please don't cry any more. It's done now." He leans forward, but as he touches her she comes up out of her pillows like a Jack-in-the-box.

"I'm *not* crying. And I don't want you to touch me. We don't get along at all. There's no use trying to disguise it any longer. You're tyrannical. I can't stand you."

Three weeks ago Benedick had abused Beatrice because he was provoked at the Indestructible Underwear man. Now Beatrice abuses Benedick because she is angry at Uncle William's vase for leaping out of her hands. She gets up with all the dignity

that she can muster and announces that she is going to her room and that she wants no dinner.

Benedick frowns and sits with his evening paper. She has hurt him with this new tone of voice, with this strange talk of their marriage being a failure. He wonders if it is. After all, *he* didn't break the damned thing. She did. She *is* unjust. If she wants to go without her dinner, let her. All for effect, that. . . .

The dining hour comes. For a moment he has a notion of going up and trying to persuade her to come down. Then he thinks of the bitter things that she has said. She wants him to come up and persuade her, of course, so that she can wear an injured air and put him still further in the wrong. He sits at the table alone and goes through the motions of eating. From time to time he listens. No sound upstairs. He is very unhappy. He misses her, and she doesn't care. That, too, begins to hurt him now. *She doesn't care that he misses her.*

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Well, he'll show her. He shakes out his newspaper with the deliberateness of a general preparing for the siege of a city; smokes his pipe, dropping a match upon the rug (Beatrice's particular abomination) with reckless temerity and diabolic satisfaction. Their marriage a failure? Let it be. His newspaper finished, he takes up a novel.

A promising quarrel, already subjective. Upstairs, he almost decides to sleep in the spare room but goes at last into their common bedroom where Beatrice is asleep. Contrary to the accepted custom Benedick has been old-fashioned enough to cling to the custom of his fathers. It is one of his Aunt Imogen's pet theories that the most fruitful cause of divorce in America is the twin bed. But to-night the double bed in which Beatrice is sleeping seems an awkward affair. He has his pride over their quarrel, she hers. She seems to be—she *is* sleeping. He can hear her deep breathing. She has let the sun go down upon her wrath. It hurts him that she could go to sleep without a recon-

ciliation. Rather bitterly he crawls into bed and settles himself, staring into the darkness for a while. She is sound asleep. At last he yields to drowsiness. . . .

Awaking suddenly he realizes that Beatrice also is awake and speaking in a perfectly audible tone.

"Asleep! Of course. How *could* you go to sleep after what you said to me! It just shows . . ."

"Did you want me to lie awake all night? You were sleeping and so—"

"I wasn't asleep."

"Perhaps not," he says maliciously. "But you were snoring."

"How odious you are!"

"You've said that before."

Silence. And then from Beatrice:

"I do wish you'd sleep in the other room."

"I'm quite comfortable here."

Another silence. "Won't you please go?"

Benedick settles himself more comfortably. "Good-night," he says.

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She makes no reply except a sort of sniff. He simulates slumber.

"You're asleep again. I'll never forgive you—never," he hears her say.

"I'm not asleep. I have a conscience."

"Conscience! You couldn't go to sleep if you cared."

He remains silent for another while and is rewarded at last by the deep breathing that he has so unfeelingly spoken of as a snore.

Benedick has won the day. Weariness has triumphed even over pride. Poor Bee! So proud, so headstrong, and yet so ineffably dear to him. The quarrel is not so deep that sleep cannot bridge the gulf between them. They are wise enough to greet each other cheerfully in the morning. The quarrel seems to have passed, but each has learned something more about the other—and perhaps a little about himself. The bright sunlight of the morning puts a new complexion upon things—the same sunlight that has shone so happily upon them for many days. Their happiness, they insist, is a habit not

to be destroyed by a broken vase. Their marriage may not be a failure after all. All outward tokens of misunderstanding vanish. But like persons who have taken unusual physical exercise, each is still sore. They kiss as he leaves for the train. Each is forgiving, but in the background of their minds is a new idea—that continual happiness is a precarious state; that happiness must be achieved by self-restraint and patience as well as by active effort; that if one is fallible, the other must have the privilege of being fallible also; that success in marriage is like success in everything else, a matter of good judgment and not of good fortune. They have seen the glimmerings of a great truth, that the obstacles which character places in the path of happiness are merely the mile posts upon the way; and that the duration of a great love is in direct ratio to the efforts to overcome those obstacles. For the truest definition of love after all is “self-forgetfulness.”

III

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1

BALZAC in one of his axioms says: "When a husband and wife have each other, the devil only knows which has the other."

Science teaches that the solar system is held in equilibrium by the action of opposing forces. So with marriage, which to be durable must keep the forces of two human beings in constant equilibrium. Neither person must dominate the other, nor give less or more than the other, for if one gives too much, one will not receive enough, and if one gives too little, one will only receive what one deserves. Thus by a system of give and take the mechanism of the married life may be kept in constant adjustment.

The finest sort of an example of domestic

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affinity is that of Schumann, the composer, and his wife who, sitting on the same bench before the piano, played his compositions, she with her right hand, he with his left, their other arms around each other. You will notice, however, that it is *his* composition that they played, of which Frau Schumann after his death was the finest exponent. Artists do not always make the best husbands and wives though there are numberless examples of happy marriages among them.

But aside from the necessity for a community of tastes and ideas, the greatest need, especially by the newly married pair, is that they be left to work out their problems alone. It is a true saying that there never was a roof large enough to shelter two households; and the young pair who go to live with the family of either is courting disaster. For no matter how amiable the "in-laws" or how kindly disposed they may be, their mere presence is enough to create opportunities for jealousy and misunderstanding. Amicable disagreements that might be speedily

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adjusted, often assume, with the presence of a third person, the characteristics of civil war.

One must overlook the shortcomings of one's own relations as one overlooks one's nose, but the shortcomings of one's "in-laws" are more obtrusive. With Benedick's own relations it is his own nose that he overlooks, a nose to which he is accustomed. But the noses of Beatrice's relations are inquisitive, intolerant noses ever ready to scent trouble. To do them justice, Beatrice's relations are very decent people, and given to deeds of kindness, but they are loath to relinquish the notion that Beatrice is the most perfect of mortals and that Benedick, though a splendid fellow, cannot presume to understand her in the least.

The materno-mania of mamma-in-law is reflected in milder form, through the various ramifications of the family, ending perhaps with Beatrice's distant cousins in a mild if dubious, curiosity as to the possibilities of the future. They are all potential critics and

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potential advisers, varying in deprecation in exact proportion to their affection for the bride. "Nice fellow, Benedick," says Cousin Kate, "but unpractical. Pity he hasn't more money." "Very interesting," says Aunt Caroline, "but self-opinionated." "Handsome eyes," says their little cousin, "but imagine a man so unfeeling as not to want a church wedding." Their encomiums are always safely qualified with a "but."

And so on, ending perhaps with papa-in-law, the mildest of men, who wishes that Benedick wouldn't smoke those filthy cigarettes. Mamma-in-law, the materno-maniac, who is playing the deeper game, asserts with the cunning of her disease, that Benedick has her entire approval and is in every respect what he should be. She believes that by aligning herself definitely and publicly upon Benedick's side, she is gaining for herself the full privileges of partnership in the new matrimonial concern. Benedick sees through her game, of course, but yields to

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her cajoleries because, for the present, there is nothing else to be done.

So, too, from Beatrice's point of view. She is, we will say, a little better off than Benedick in the smaller number of his relations. Benedick's father and mother are dead, but he has been brought up under the sheltering wing of a widowed aunt. This aunt, then, with a married sister living in a distant city, are Benedick's intimate family. Beatrice has met Benedick's sister Mary for the first time a few days before the wedding. Mary is red of face, and inclined to stoutness and good food, because her husband is in the coal business. They get along beautifully from the beginning. It is usually easy to get along with people who are well fed.

But Benedick's Aunt Imogen has, from the first moment of meeting, filled Beatrice with vague anxieties. She is not in the least well-fed looking like Mary. And it is easy to see that she is a very superior person, showing the tokens of her high lineage in her

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slender figure, her aquiline nose, proud bearing, pursed lips, and frosty eye. But as Benedick adores her, it is quite clear that Beatrice must make the effort to adore her also. To Beatrice, who comes of a free and easy family, not even in the wholesale line of business, the traditions and culture of Aunt Imogen whose grandfathers were all professional men, are rather terrifying. Aunt Imogen, she is sure, already looks upon the marriage that Benedick has made as a failure. Benedick has told Beatrice that Aunt Imogen has not wanted him to go into the advertising business, but that his success in that calling has already justified her belief that he has a real talent for the writing of fiction. He has told Beatrice also that Aunt Imogen has really the softest heart in the world and that you can do anything with her if you "take her right." What seems more important to Beatrice is that Aunt Imogen should "take *her* right." Beatrice is, by this time, fully aware of her cultural deficiencies. She has been just a jolly sort

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of a girl with no pretensions to the kind of thing that Aunt Imogen considers essential in a young woman who is to marry her beloved nephew. Beatrice is very thankful for the copy of the *Ring and the Book*, won as a prize at the high school for her essay on *Pride and Prejudice*, and shows it to Aunt Imogen with a pardonable pride. But as the conversation becomes literary at once, Beatrice is soon reduced to monosyllables. She feels that her early attempts to have Aunt Imogen "take her right" have been failures.

These, then, are the "in-laws," especially provided to menace the happiness of Benedick and Beatrice—to point the moral and adorn the tale.

In the case of other brides and grooms, the "in-laws" will be other persons with slightly differing physical and mental characteristics, but Aunt Imogen, mamma and papa-in-law, Sister Mary, and Cousin Kate may be considered as typical of the persons who are expected to act in a supervisory ca-

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capacity upon the newly married pair. And Uncle William. There is sure to be an Uncle William, in one household or the other. It is Beatrice's well-to-do bachelor Uncle William who has given Benedick and Beatrice the hideous vase of yellow, the placing of which on the mantel has caused the first serious disruption of the new household. Uncle William is stout, bald, and given to plaid suits and fancy waistcoats. He visits the new home frequently. He is the apple of Beatrice's eye. To Benedick he is the apple of discord. Perhaps Benedick is a trifle jealous, a trifle bewildered, that his darling should care for a man who could wear such a waistcoat. And, too, a trifle bored by Uncle William's genius for the commonplace. Uncle William seems to fill the whole of the small house from top to bottom with commonplace as soon as he comes into it.

"Well, how are the turtledoves to-day," he roars amiably; or calls them the "newly-weds," which is even less to Benedick's lik-

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ing. He has also an unhappy passion for coming up behind Benedick and clapping him heavily between the shoulder blades. But Uncle William has a kind heart, and how can one quarrel with a man who sends out almost every week from his grocery store in town a bill of goods without the bill?

He is so kind, so generous, that the unfortunate accident to the yellow vase is passed by with a florid gesture of unconcern.

"Smashed, eh? Oh, well! As the fellow says, 'Accidents will happen in the best regulated families.' 'Many a slip, twixt the cup and the lip.' More where that came from. I'll see about it."

This optimism gives Benedick a moment of vague uneasiness. The yellow vase has connoted, and still connotes, discord now happily resolved into the concord of affection.

But the conversation changes and Uncle William directs it along the channels of

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commonplace which so delight him. He tells ancient stories with the gusto of an archæologist who has just brought some marvelous work of antiquity to the light; and when the talk languishes propounds conundrums with an oracular air. "Here's a new one I heard at the store to-day," he will say. "Why can't anybody ever starve in the Sahara Desert?" Give it up? Because of the sandwiches there. *Sand which is there?* Get it? That's a good one isn't it, Bee?"

And Beatrice looks upon him fondly and laughs. She laughs with evident enjoyment. He is her own Uncle William and so amusing. Benedick is disappointed in her. Is this the sort of fare that really pleases Beatrice's intellectual palate? She never laughs like that at the subtler stories that Benedick brings home to her from the office. And yet Benedick knows that this man is one of the most progressive persons in the grocery business.

When Uncle William goes Beatrice ex-

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plains that it is his childishness that amuses her. His heart is simple, she says, like a child's, an opinion with which Benedick hastens to agree.

Uncle William comes frequently to the house—always to Sunday dinner when Beatrice and Benedick are not dining with mamma-in-law or Aunt Imogen, and often in the middle of the week. It cannot be in Benedick's heart to protest, since all of the food that they are eating, except perhaps the roast, is the gift of the visitor. But Uncle William is more oracular than ever and goes about with the mysterious air of one possessing a valuable secret. He has grown so fond of his new nephew that he slaps him on the back more frequently than ever. He is one of those whole-souled creatures, the "good-fellow," whom everybody loves, and Benedick realizes that to inform such a man that he is a nuisance and a bore would be flying in the face of Providence and courting social ostracism. So Benedick wears the fixed smile of a ballet dancer, listening to

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Uncle William's commonplaces with the fatalism of the damned.

It is not until some weeks later that the reason for Uncle William's furtive air is revealed. Benedick, after a long day at the office, opens his front door and enters the living hall—then stands for a moment, transfixed. For upon the mantelshelf, garish and entire, stands the hideous yellow vase that was broken. It is as though some malign act of sorcery had been performed in his absence, some conjuring trick, defying all physical laws. Fascinated by these thoughts he takes a step or two closer. The dragon stares at him with baleful eyes that have in them, nevertheless, an ironic twinkle. "You thought you'd gotten rid of me," says the dragon, "but here I am again, old top—and *you won't dare to move me again.*"

Helpless, Benedick turns away and slowly hangs up his hat, for he knows that this is so. And then Beatrice, hearing his footsteps, comes running down to greet him.

"Oh, Benedick. Did you see the yellow

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vase? Uncle William has been scouring the country for it and at last found there was this duplicate in San Francisco. Wasn't it sweet of him?"

He realizes that behind her tone of gratitude and composure, there is a subtle note of triumph. But he does not take up the challenge. He has not been without guilt in a sense of unholy joy at the mishap to the original yellow vase, and knows that Beatrice has read his secret. But two broken yellow vases! He realizes that the thing is impossible, bowing his head in defeat. Uncle William has triumphed.

2

If Uncle William is just a bore to Benedick, Beatrice is sure that she cannot dismiss the thought of Aunt Imogen so lightly. For both of them are women, you see, not thinking as Benedick does with his prejudices, but with their feelings. Beatrice tries her best to "take Aunt Imogen right." She tries to realize that Aunt Imogen has for years been

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a sort of second-hand mother to Benedick, looking to his linen, darning his stockings, and providing for his welfare by a thousand acts of personal service and self-denial. Aunt Imogen has her claims upon him and upon her. Beatrice is not jealous, exactly, of Aunt Imogen, because Benedick's love for her and hers for him, is so fine a thing that nobody can really come between them. No, she is not jealous of Aunt Imogen, but rather of what Aunt Imogen stands for—Benedick's past, the years before Beatrice knew Benedick, during which, with Aunt Imogen's help, he was able to get along so well without her. Beatrice realizes that in certain ways Benedick reflects Aunt Imogen in his thoughts, his aims, his culture. That little trick of smoothing the tablecloth with the palms of his hands—in Benedick just a caress for a thing that belongs to them both; but in Aunt Imogen the corrective criticism—the elimination of a wrinkle in the cloth that Beatrice has laid too carelessly. Then that quick keen look of Benedick's across

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the table, in interest or inquiry. Aunt Imogen looks just like that, but narrowly in a sort of challenge. Little things, all of them, almost indefinable, but not to be disregarded. Both women wear constantly upon their faces the smiles of utter amiability, and like mamma-in-law, both are mild maniacs upon the object of their affections.

It is a precarious state when two women are in love with one man. All drama seems to depend upon this sort of unfortunate triangle. And whether the *tertium quid* be maid or widow, old or young, the potentialities for the tragic remain. Aunt Imogen takes the place of Benedick's dead mother, and has a shrewd sense of her responsibility in seeing that Benedick gets what is coming to him. She likes Beatrice. She thinks that she is a very splendid, whole-hearted sort of a creature who has been abominably brought up. Girls were not so when she was a young lady. She blames mamma-in-law, of course. If Aunt Imogen had had a daughter of her own, her child would have been brought up

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quite differently. But she has had no daughter (or son except Benedick) and so this opportunity for vicarious motherhood is too important to be wasted. She has had the reputation all her life of being a tactful woman, for this, she understands, is a part of good breeding, but her affections are now involved in Benedick's happiness, and she cannot always restrain her expressions of opinion.

For instance, she has sympathized with Benedick in his distaste for Uncle William's yellow vase and has secretly rejoiced when it was destroyed. She has given Beatrice a talk upon ceramics and has brought her from the library a book upon the porcelains of the exact period that the spurious vase of Uncle William is supposed to represent. This, you will admit, is carrying the contention too far. Beatrice thinks so, and refuses to read the book, telling Benedick that she wishes Aunt Imogen would mind her own business. Benedick wears a pained expression. But Beatrice has already quite

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cleverly learned the trick of accompanying her bitter pills with a sweet, and as she makes the remark about Aunt Imogen she throws her arms around Benedick's neck and kisses him, so that the pained expression does not linger.

"If they would only leave us alone," he says in a whisper but with a sense of disloyalty to his beloved aunt. Beatrice takes her arms down.

"They?" she asks suddenly. "You mean Aunt Imogen, don't you, darling?"

"I mean all of them," he replies rather fiercely.

Beatrice fusses at her workbasket looking for buttons for a suit of Benedick's Indestructible Underwear.

"But none of *my* people interfere in our affairs as your Aunt Imogen does," she says softly (the pill with the sweet again).

Benedick taps the evening paper correctively. "Oh, don't they?" he says, "I thought they did."

"Who?" asks Beatrice calmly. She has

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found the button and is threading a needle.

"Who?" All of them—mamma-in-law, Cousin Kate, Uncle William—"

"Benedick!" Beatrice drops her hands into her lap and stares at him in surprise. "Why, mother *never* says a thing about the house any more. Cousin Kate scarcely comes here at all, and Uncle William! I don't see how you can possibly accuse *him* of anything but generosity and kindness."

Benedick seems to read the paper for a moment. "I am very fond of your mother," he says at last deliberately, "and of course you needed her. But you've got to admit that she made us buy a lot of unnecessary things."

"What things?"

"Oh, that expensive couch cover, the fancy pillow shams and bedspreads."

"I *knew* you were going to speak of those bedspreads again," says Beatrice indignantly. "I thought that question was closed. Mother thought of them, but she didn't order them and you know it. I did.

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I wasn't going to let Georgiana Smith have better bedspreads than *I* have."

"There you go," says Benedick ironically, getting up and pacing the floor. "Georgiana Smith! Everything that goes into this house has to be compared with what Georgiana has in hers. Why, Georgiana's husband makes twice as much as I do."

"Well, suppose he does. That's no reason why we shouldn't have a good bedspread. Really, Benny!"

"But don't you see, Bee—there's no reason why we should be in competition with anybody. Your mother puts that in your head. It's just snobbishness, I tell you. I don't care what Georgiana Smith has or her husband either. If I made my money in shady real estate deals, as he does, you could fill the house with bedspreads. But I don't."

Beatrice laughs provokingly.

"No, you write ads for Indestructible Underwear that I have to repair every week."

"Well," returns Benedick, "I'm not re-

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sponsible for that. I don't *make* 'em, do I?"

"No. And neither does Georgiana Smith's husband make the real estate."

This reply seems conclusive to Beatrice, who smiles softly.

"And the canary!" says Benedick explosively, feeling that she has eluded him. "What was the sense of getting a Tyrolean warbler for ten dollars when you could have bought a good bird for two dollars and a half? It doesn't sing anyhow. Your mother bought that and charged it on my bill. Why? Because Georgiana Smith has one. Georgiana Smith! I could kill that woman. I wish she'd never been born."

"I believe you're stingy, Benny. I never thought so before."

"And then that cheap washing machine that doesn't work."

"It *does* work. Who said it didn't?"

"Well, there's a bill for repairs. I didn't want to get the thing. Your mother did. We could have got along without it."

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Beatrice now lays aside the Indestructible Underwear.

"And had my hands all red and coarse and swollen, like a cook's," she says reproachfully.

She knows that this will silence him. It does.

"I think it's unkind of you always to be bringing up this old stuff. We had to have a bedspread; the washing machine *does* work, and the canary—" she gives a little sniff, "well, if I can't have a canary like Georgiana's to keep me from being lonely through the day, it's too bad. That what I say, it is—too bad."

They have both learned moderation from previous misunderstandings. Beatrice no longer weeps when little things happen to disturb her, and Benedick no longer flies off the handle when they disagree. They have learned to save those devices for matters of real importance. At the worst, they now resort to the duel ironic.

Beatrice, having won her victory with a

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reproach, is silent. Benedick fills his pipe. In spite of the fact that everything he has said is true, he is aware of a feeling that he has gotten the worst of the encounter. From its place upon the mantelshelf the red-eyed dragon grins malevolently. It is his evil genius—that dragon. Some devil in that grin provokes him to prolong the argument.

“Oh, well, I’m not blaming your mother—or anybody. But we’d get along a lot better if people would let us alone.”

“Some people,” says Beatrice sweetly.

Benedick stops pacing and looks at her. Her downcast head has the seraphic innocence of a saint in stained glass.

“You mean Aunt Imogen, don’t you?” he asks in a staccato accent.

“I don’t mean anybody, if *you* don’t.”

“You *do* mean Aunt Imogen. And I might as well say right away that I can’t understand your not trying to get along better with Aunt Imogen.”

“We get along beautifully,” says Bea-

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trice. "How *could* I help getting along with anybody who is as perfect as she is?"

The straight thrust with her cool blue blade. Benedick parries and thrusts.

"Why not tell the truth? You don't like her."

"Oh, yes, I do.—But I'd like her better if she wouldn't try to make me as perfect as she is."

"You don't understand her. It's just because she's so devoted to us both that she wants to be helpful."

"Helpful!" says Beatrice with a sniff. "Do you think she's helpful when she tries to correct the way I do things—how I laugh, how I walk, what I wear? Why, the other night she actually commented on the way I sat crossing my knees showing my ankles! And in my own home—really!"

Beatrice's tone is that of one whose emotions beggar description and she goes on quickly. "All of my friends have always been satisfied with the way I act, the clothes

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I wear, and how I wear them—and I *will* cross my legs if I want to.”

“Aunt Imogen didn’t object to your crossing your legs,” says Benedick in rebuttal. “She crosses her own legs. It was just, that—that you might have—have seemed—”

He loses courage, and Beatrice pounces upon the silence like a kitten upon a neglected ball of wool.

“Immodest! Why not say it?”

“But, my dear, I never thought such a thing.”

“But *she* does. She wants to think it. Just as she wants to think I’m lacking in culture and refinement.”

“That’s not true. She thinks you’re one of the finest girls she knows.”

“Oh, she says that to you. What else *could* she say to you? But I know. She wants me to like Browning, art galleries, and Ming pottery, just because *she* does. Well, I *might* like them if she didn’t want me to. And even if I did like them I wouldn’t let *her* know it.”

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"But that's no reason, my dear, why just from obstinacy you should tell Aunt Imogen that you adore frivolous novels, sex movies, and cabaret shows. You don't like coarseness of any kind—you never did. I know why you say those things—just because you want to shock her."

Beatrice frowns.

"She's so *perfect*, so stodgy, I *do* want to shock her. She has an ingrowing conscience. I'm a Philistine, she thinks. Well, let her think so. I'd rather have her believe I'm that than be hypocrite enough to try to be as perfect as she is."

"Really, Bee!"

"Well, *you* brought the subject up. I'm glad you did. Now you know what I think."

Benedick frowns. He can't be disloyal to Aunt Imogen. So, fatuously, he plunges into a mistake.

"But I don't see the need of abusing her like this. I can't listen. I'd like you to know that I love Aunt Imogen very dearly—"

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Beatrice rises suddenly, her lips compressed.

"More than you do me. Why don't you say so?" she cries passionately.

"Beatrice!" It is the first time this grave charge has been made against him.

"It's true," she continues, pacing the floor. "You can't see her faults as you see mine. You think that everything that she says and does is right. You permit her to come into this house and criticize everything in it including *me*. It's unbearable and I'm not going to stand it another minute."

Her tone is immoderate. He sees a sudden light. She has been so quiet lately with the new happiness of the thing that she has told him. Sometimes women are unreasonable at such a time. He now blames himself bitterly for having brought up the discussion and goes to her gently trying to put his arm about her. But she throws herself away from him.

"No. We might as well understand each other. If your Aunt Imogen comes into

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this house finding fault with everything—I'm going out of it."

"You're talking nonsense. I've never heard Aunt Imogen say a word of real criticism, or fault finding."

"Oh, haven't you! You don't want to. She may not say much before you, but she looks me up and down from head to foot every time she comes into the house, and her eyes are always prying."

"Beatrice, dear, you imagine things."

"Well, I don't imagine that she's making my life miserable, coming between us all the time the way she does. You've got to choose between us," says Beatrice wildly. "Either she minds her own business or—or—"

"Or what?" he asks imprudently.

"Or I go back to mother."

All former tragedies pale before this dreadful suggestion. She does not mean what she says. He knows that she does not mean it, but it is a dreadful threat just the same. He is sure now that the nervous state that she has induced is the result of her phys-

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ical condition. He feels that he is a brute, doubly a brute when he sees a tear gleam upon her cheek and fall, scintillating in the lamp light. She is always more lovely in emotion.

He goes to her softly. She repulses him. "Beatrice!"

She gives him a fleeting glance. "I will," she falters. "I mean it. I do."

But her tone is less convincing, for he has her in his arms firmly and whispers with great tenderness:

"Bee, dear. No one can come between us. Not your people or mine. I would rather lose them all than to see you cry. You are more precious to me than all the world. Especially now—" And so on in lowered tones, her tears ruining his new cravat. But that doesn't matter. Nothing matters except the fact that she relaxes in his arms and, murmuring, lays her lips to his.

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3

It has purposely been shown that both Benedick and Beatrice have their unreasonable moments, that Benedick is often to blame and that Beatrice, no matter how hard she tries, does not always succeed in being tolerant. They are like Stevenson's new couple in a carriage behind a runaway horse; each pulling on his own rein and headed quite properly for the ditch. That Benedick and Beatrice do not reach the ditch is more a matter of good luck than management. But the horse is not yet a confirmed runaway. He is a young horse, running away as much for the fun of the thing as anything else, and he has one eye on the ditch, which may do him as much damage as the occupants of the vehicle. And so when he is winded he settles again into a canter, then a trot and a walk, while Benedick and Beatrice relinquish the reins and weep over the perils that they have escaped. Affection has, in some sort, been in control of their destinies,

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and love has moderated the wildness of the clutch of their fingers upon the reins of the runaway. They both know that there have been moments like the one when they flew by the rock by the roadside (which might be Georgiana Smith), or the one at the bridge over the stream (which might be mamma-in-law), or the telegraph pole at the turn (which might indeed be Aunt Imogen) when the slightest pull of the reins might have sent their frail new vehicle crashing into kingdom come. But neither of them have pulled so wildly that this has happened. With the danger past, Georgiana Smith to Benedick has ceased to be a menace and is just a rock; and mamma-in-law is after all a very stout and serviceable part of the highway. And to Beatrice, even Aunt Imogen regains all the virtues of a telegraph pole. They are now mere landmarks upon the way, to be more carefully considered in future excursions down the vale of misunderstanding. Nothing matters, nothing can ever matter, but to keep their vehicle upon the road, with

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their steed at the comfortable trot which permits a proper enjoyment of the scenery. And it is not such a bad horse, after all, to have kept to the road so well under trying circumstances.

One might suppose from the warnings that are uttered and written that civil war was the rule rather than the exception in married life. Even these examples of domestic misunderstanding may obscure the purpose of this book in attempting to give a picture of a typical young couple in the early years of the interesting adventure. Weeks of contentment must be read between these moments of discord. To paint the picture truly perhaps it might be wiser to dwell upon the long moments of happiness—the joys of putting the furniture into place, the hours of evening alone (between the visits of the “in-laws”), the helpful discussions of the problems that face them, the heart to heart talks of two chums, sexless, who have determined with the best will in the world to help each other upon the way, and

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lastly the miracle that has been revealed to them of the new life that has been intrusted to their keeping. These are the rewards of those who understand the actual meaning of the marriage contract, learning thereby to realize the necessity for compromises during this period of adjustment without which so many young people fall afoul of the rocks. There are those who would have you to understand that unhappy marriages are a matter of temperament. It is the cry in all the divorce courts—incompatibility. Most unhappy marriages are not a matter of temperament—but of temper, bad temper, not even reasonably controlled. Bad temper added to unreason and a desire to dominate will wreck the most auspicious marriage that was ever made in heaven.

We have seen that Beatrice has a temper—a bad temper at times, because like most American girls she has been spoiled by over-indulgence. But she is not an unreasonable creature, and she has a heart of wax when she is “taken right”—which means right in

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Benedick's arms. Benedick, too, has a temper, but being masculine, has it under reasonable control. And he does not want to dominate his wife. You might say that he is still a little timid of her moods and yet delighting in them because of her infinite capacity for surprises.

The quarrels that they have had can be traced in each case, moreover, almost directly to some good intention of one of the "in-laws." Mamma-in-law, Cousin Kate, Uncle William, Aunt Imogen, all must share in the responsibility for one or another of these quarrels.

4

A man in court was asked by the judge:

"How are your domestic relations?"

To which he replied in all sincerity: "My domestic relations are all right. It's my wife's relations that bother me, Judge."

There is a popular song which begins, "Of all my wife's relations I like myself the best."

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Why popular, unless it touches some vibrant chord in many human hearts?

This is the burden of all literature upon the subject. The imperishable quality of the mother-in-law joke is due to the fact that it has touched in all the ages the human chord in the hearts of men and women. It is because her case is so tragic that it has such vast possibilities for humor. The weekly magazine and the "funny" page of the daily paper would find themselves even to-day in editorial difficulties if the joke about the mother-in-law were banned, and the music hall monologist would be reduced to silence or tears.

It is with a deep appreciation of the tragic in her situation that mamma-in-law has been treated so kindly in these pages. At the worst she has only been called a materno-maniac, which is no joke at all, but the solemn truth.

There are, of course, good mothers-in-law and bad mothers-in-law, just as there are good and bad sisters and cousins and

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aunts. But the mother instinct, if more intense, is also more accurate. If she errs in her desire to be of service to her daughter, she errs more often than not through real affection and a desire to save her child from many of the difficulties that she has herself endured. The bride is, in spite of being a bride, also her beloved daughter who is leaving her house to return no more. The place that she held in her daughter's heart is filled by another. That would be tragic enough without having the pain of feeling that she is not wanted. She wants to be wanted. When on the eve of the wedding Cousin Kate thoughtfully reminds her that she is going to lose her only daughter, she bravely replies with the phrase that has done duty for centuries, "No, I'm not going to lose a daughter, but gain a son." But she knows that she lies when she says it, as millions of other mothers have known from time immemorial. Beatrice is going from her to Benedick, and she is not coming back—at least not the Beatrice who gave her her

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girlish confidences and asked her advice, for these now belong by right to another.

Is it a wonder, then, that she should seek by every device to prolong the old relationship—to offer herself ungrudgingly as she has always done upon the shrine of her affection? And if she should exceed, through kindness, through zeal or even through jealousy her proper prerogatives in the new household, must she be reviled from age to age?

To make jest of a serious business she feels toward Benedick much as the young colored woman did when about to depart on her wedding journey. Mandy came to the mistress of the house where she had been in service, tendering twenty dollars for safe keeping.

“Why, Mandy,” said the mistress, “won’t you need this money on the honeymoon?”

“No, *ma-am*,” replied Mandy, “you don’t ketch *me* takin’ twenty dollars away on a trip with any strange nigger.”

Benedick is the “strange nigger,” the

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nigger in the wood pile, you might say, with strange possibilities, no matter how well she thinks she knows him, for evil.

All men are perhaps not as Benedick, who sees goodness of heart behind the intrusions of mamma-in-law. She does unnecessary things, of course, and he forgives her for the sake of Beatrice, though the couch cover, the ornamental bedspread, and the canary give him intervals of rancor. She has a good heart, and this covers a multitude of sins. And this sentiment from a "nigger in a wood pile" is worthy of all praise.

As to matters between Beatrice and Aunt Imogen, if Beatrice is wise she will cease trying to find troubles where troubles do not exist, for Aunt Imogen is not, and has not been at any time, the sort of creature that Beatrice has imagined her, but a dear old lady, rather delicate in health and rather old-fashioned in her ideas, whose only thought is for Benedick's happiness. And if her only thought is for Benedick's happiness is not that Beatrice's thought also? The idea of

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this community of interests comes to Beatrice after her reconciliation with her husband, in a sort of revelation.

It is love for Benedick that makes her suddenly kind in her thoughts of others, for that is the way of love. Beatrice is thoughtful all day, smiling to herself as she repairs his Indestructible Underwear. It is indeed a very beautiful world if only one "takes it right." She goes down the stairs and faces the yellow vase on the mantel, at last, and then very carefully removes it to the table in the corner, replacing it by the handsome Chinese bowl given them by Benedick's best man. Then she stands, with her head cocked critically upon one side. Benedick's taste really *is* better than hers. And how pleased he will be!

He *is* pleased. He notices the change in the appearance of the room as soon as he comes into the house, and in some bewilderment goes up to Beatrice's room.

"Uncle William's vase!" he gasps, "who moved it?"

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"I did," she says calmly, as though it were a matter that she had long been contemplating. "It looks better in the corner. Don't you think so?"

He kisses her as though to confirm a miracle, but makes no further comment. Then after he sits and is finished telling her the news of the day,

"I've been thinking, Benny," she says, "that it is time that we had a love feast here."

"A love feast!" he exclaims. "As if every meal wasn't a love feast!"

"No, I mean a dinner for the 'in-laws'—Aunt Imogen, Uncle William, Mother, and Cousin Kate. A real love feast. Don't you think that would be a nice idea?"

"Perfect! But what made you think of that?"

"Oh, I don't know. I just thought perhaps—that it might make us all care for one another a little more."

Few women care to admit in so many

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words that they have been in the wrong in anything, but Benedick knows that this is Beatrice's way of telling him that she is sorry for her unfeeling comments upon Aunt Imogen. The clouds have cleared away. Benedick can be no less generous than she. He decides to be as tolerant of his "in-laws" as though they were his own people, for if Beatrice can learn to see things through his eyes, he can learn to see them through hers.

So all is well. They have crossed the Rubicon. And upon the other shore the landscape stretches in serene beauty before them. Their happiness grows greater with the sense of another presence that is soon to join them, another life that they have created who will be both Benedick and Beatrice and make them more truly *one*. The end of their first year of married life finds them still going forward hand in hand up the mountain of life looking backward from time to time upon the pitfalls that they have avoided, aware of little hills of contentment

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here and there, little peaks of joy, but none so high as those that lie before them.

They have learned that the way to stay married is along a path not always straight, not always definite to the eye, fairly rugged in places but not so difficult after all. The second year awaits them. They can see it clearly from the spot where they stand—a smooth way it seems from a distance, but they know that there must be hazards, too far away now to be seen in detail, and not to be considered until reached. But they are not alarmed. The first tests have found them equal to the strain.

What, then, in the final analysis, has kept Benedick and Beatrice together upon the way? We have seen that in the beginning neither of them has been the victim of a violent infatuation. They have drifted into marriage, propelled by the slow forces of admiration, friendship, affection, propinquity, through which they have had just a glimpse of love itself. We have seen also that they have learned that love was not

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passion—though passion was a part of it—but something more gentle, that had to do with the mind as well as the body, and that the essence of love was self-forgetfulness. They did not love each other, they knew, until they learned that stupendous truth. It is the willingness to submit to the applications of this truth that has kept their vision clear enough to understand each other's faults and to condone them. We have seen also that the girl is mother to the woman, the boy the father to the man, and that the fundamental differences in the sexes are inherent and not to be corrected—merely accepted as such.

Because of a comprehension of each other's limitations in being like each other, Benedick and Beatrice have weathered the squalls that often bring confusion upon the small craft and prepare the way for shipwreck. Friendly, but impulsive, hands have seized the wheel and driven them for a while from the course that they meant to sail, until love has taken the helm again.

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Benedick and Beatrice are no extraordinary pair. They have been chosen because of their tendencies to be true to type. They are not merely Benedick and Beatrice but every man and every woman, who must learn that the growth and duration of love is in exact proportion to their resistance to the obstacles which the mishaps and stupidities of life put in the way of their happiness. They have learned in overcoming these obstacles that they have played sometimes a difficult game; for (as Balzac says) "the heart of a woman is like a lyre which does not reveal its secret except to a skillful player"; and the heart of a man, just because it is a braver instrument, cannot be made to give forth its finest sounds when played by light or frivolous fingers.

IV

THE CHILD

1

THE newspapers, from time to time, exhibit the photographs of aged persons who have enjoyed their golden weddings. These persons almost with one accord proclaim that their fifty years of life together have been "just one prolonged honeymoon."

These aged persons are either forgetful or else casually mendacious. The photographs themselves give one somehow the impression of age and dignity resorting to unworthy subterfuge to deceive their grandchildren and to encourage them to enter a state of being which they themselves have endured with some pains and finished in a kind of triumph over destiny. "There!"

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their faces seem to say, "we've done it. It was a tough job, but we've managed it somehow."

If this attack upon the veracity of these respectable persons be resented, consider then, these few statistics upon the honeymoon.

Dr. E. J. Hardy, who has given some study to the problems of marriage, relates the interesting affair of the Dunmow bacon. The "Dunmow Flitch" as it was called, was first offered in the year one thousand one hundred and eleven when the custom was established of awarding a flitch of bacon to any couple who should come to Dunmow, in Essex, and kneeling on two stones at the church door, could swear that for the first year and a day after their marriage they had never had a household brawl or wished themselves unmarried. The results of the offer are rather surprising. There were exactly eight claimants to whom the flitch was awarded during the five hundred years between Twelve hundred and forty-four

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and Seventeen hundred and seventy-two.

Many couples have won the flitch since one thousand seven hundred and seventy-two, which goes to show that marriages are happier than they used to be, or else that people are growing fonder of bacon.

It may be assumed, therefore, that the perpetual honeymoon is beyond the power of human flesh. For the honeymoon itself is a period of blissful alarms over unconsidered trifles, of romance flirting coyly with ponderable realities, a period of excitations seeking adjustment in vague compromises.

And the hazards of marriage do not end with the first year. The hazards of the second and third year, though based upon a tried relationship, are still to be approached with a wary eye and passed with the caution of growing experience. They are hazards of a different sort—hazards of habit grown wearisome, of custom grown stale, of familiarity breeding forgetfulness of the sprightly impulses of the honeymoon. Ease

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and comfort are apt to induce the careless manners of the slipper and fireside habit in which, as Stevenson says, a man "is so comfortable and happy that he begins to prefer comfort and happiness to everything else on earth—his wife included." And the wife is apt to fall into habits of introspection, comparing in her dreaming her careless husband with some hero of fiction in the book that she is reading, quite forgetful of the fact that she, too, is a horrible example of contentment run to seed.

No, happy marriage is not heroic. Heroism is a thing of passions and any passion is as unreliable a neighbor in a house as a defective insulator or a toppling chimney. Possession is cooler than desire, and properly so, for marriage begun at a white heat will burn itself out for lack of new fuel. Better indeed the yawn of healthy weariness at the open fire (or even the gas log) than the excitements of moving at high speeds which exhaust both the patience and the temper.

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2

The decision of Benedick and Beatrice to make their home in the country is based upon the desire to have room enough to exercise out of doors in clean air when the work of the day is done. It was Voltaire who said: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin," one of the wisest sayings of a very clever old man. "We must cultivate our garden." We must have a place of our own, so to say, where we can grow those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul. The garden may be no larger than a city back yard, may, indeed, only exist in the spirit if one is forced to live in town, but a garden of some sort there must be to cultivate if one would be happy.

There are young married people who never cultivate their gardens, who have no conception of the meaning of the phrase, dwelling in a fictitious atmosphere, thinking that they are getting the most out of life and building for themselves a succession of

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empty years ending in a discontented and lonely old age.

They are innocent enough in their hope to continue to "have a good time," but their innocence is the measure of their ignorance of their obligations to society and to each other. These are the young people who live in stuffy apartments in side streets of the great cities where the rule is that "no dogs or children are allowed." Marriage to such folks is merely a new opportunity to selfishness and self-gratification. They ignore the basic idea of the contract, for marriage means the family, and the denial of children, from economic or social motives, is a mere evasion of duty, unjustifiable on any grounds but those of ill health. It is a remarkable fact that young people who have children always "get along somehow," for there is a special department of Heaven devoted to the supervision and care of growing infants. So, whatever the heavenly provision with regard to dogs, the children of young married people manage to survive.

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The easiest way to stay married is to raise a family as quickly as possible, for every child forges a strong link in the chain that holds husband and wife together. And any roof wide enough to shelter a man and woman is wide enough to shelter children too.

No one has told Benedick any of these things, and he has never even read *Monsieur de Voltaire*, but he is proud enough to wish for children of his own and wise enough to plan from the beginning a home and a garden to cultivate. The fear that she is "burying herself in the country," voiced by some of her relatives has not deterred Beatrice, who has been ready to put aside childish things and trust herself unreservedly to the life with Benedick.

She confides to Benedick that she is glad that they are going to have a child, for Georgiana Smith has one. Benedick frowns at his paper and then laughs. He can afford to laugh at the old contention

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now. Georgiana Smith! Who cares how many children Georgiana has?

He is very happy and so is Beatrice. They have a feeling of security in themselves as a family, the unit of society. The honeymoon has set, and the harvest moon has risen. The honeymoon, as every one knows, is made of green cheese, but the harvest moon provides more substantial fare. Benedick and Beatrice like the harvest moon better than the honeymoon. For the honeymoon was merely a moon of promise. But the harvest moon is the moon of fulfillment. The harvest has given its answer to the promise of spring. Benedick still smokes by the fire but with a new sense of his importance in the general scheme of things. Upon the other side of the fireplace by the lamp on the table sits Beatrice, her fingers busy, sewing or knitting. The articles that she is making are quite small, and when Benedick looks at them he laughs. She is still a trifle self-conscious about her sewing but holds her work out at arm's

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length, proud of her achievement, for she thinks that it is good. She has not been trained as a needle-woman, and unconscious of the thousand mothers whose blood is in her veins, thinks that her skill is rather remarkable.

During the day, in his absence, there are frequent visits to the house by the feminine "in-laws" when there is a great fluttering and the utterance of cooing sounds as the articles are taken forth from their sachet and minutely examined. There has been a great discussion as to whether the small sweaters, afghans, and ribbons shall be of pink or blue. Blue, as becoming a man-child, is at last selected. Even when it is explained to him, all of this is very mystifying to Benedick, for he sees no reason for this curious convention.

"Why not green," he asks brightly, "or better still, since we don't know which it is to be, purple, a pretty mixture of both blue and pink."

They look at him, Beatrice and the femi-

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nine "in-laws," with a pitying air, and their silence legislates him out of existence. These are matters in which he can have no concern, and he learns in future to accept everything that happens in the house without question.

Mamma-in-law is now actively in charge. This is her hour. She has wanted to be wanted, and now she has her wish. It is a great comfort for Beatrice to have her, and Benedick is no longer jealous. He succumbs to the inevitable and retires gracefully into the background, aware of his insufficiency. He takes note, with curiosity, of the arrival of the trained nurse, a woman of middle age and severe countenance whose casual glance passes over him, as it does over the other objects which furnish the room.

He makes up his mind at once that he does not like her and is conscious of vague alarms that his darling is henceforth to be intrusted to the hands of such an ogress. She comes down stairs a few moments later, stepping softly but with great assurance. She is attired in white and wears an inverted

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cuff upon the top of her head, altogether a business-like and imposing person. At the dinner table her manner thaws enough to permit her to tell Benedick and Beatrice of her various employments in the houses of the great and near-great, where there are many servants to do her bidding. She does not intend to be unpleasant. This is just her way of saying that Benedick's house and its equipment is inadequate to the purposes of her visit. She eats sparingly and daintily, reflecting thereby both the refinement of manner of the great mansions from which she has so recently come and a little of contempt for the quality of Benedick's food and the skill of the latest person whom Beatrice has persuaded to come into the kitchen.

Either from a natural instinct for hospitality, or from a sense of her own personal dependence upon the skill of the visitor, or perhaps even from a determination to make the best of a bad job, Beatrice goes out of her way to make things pleasant, carrying on a lively patter of conversation upon sub-

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jects that may please and drawing the reluctant and silent Benedick into the general discussion.

This woman, Benedick decides, is not a pleasant companion at their table, for she is like Stevenson's recording angel, domesticated between them, but he reassures himself with the thought that she has capable-looking hands, is obviously intelligent, and that she has not been hired to contribute to his sense of the æsthetic. The doctor approves of this decision, asserting, moreover, that this nurse is a paragon among nurses and quite different to most of the fluffy young things who come out of the hospitals, going forth into the world of suffering, lightly powdering their noses. This is only common sense, of course, and if the woman is really a paragon there is nothing else to be said, but Benedick finds himself wondering why it is not humanly possible for a paragon to be both fluffy and a paragon.

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3

The man-child arrives quite safely in the doctor's black hand bag thus justifying the choice of blue afghans. Benedick, who has been called home from his office during the afternoon, spends some miserable hours pacing the floor of the living hall, listening intently and smoking much. Upstairs at last there is a small sound, a sort of thin squeak like nothing that has been heard in the house before except when the hinges of the bathroom door once needed oiling; and in a little while the doctor comes down smiling and offers his congratulations. It is all very wonderful.

Beatrice, too, is wonderful and greets him with a wan smile of peace and happiness. This is a great moment in Benedick's life, and he dedicates it to a silent resolve that nothing short of death shall come between them—a moment of exaltation for them both, to have its influence, if they are wise, on every joy or sorrow that may follow. The

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marriage ceremony and contract merely made it possible for them to become one, but it is childbirth that has actually made them so. Benedick sits beside her holding her hand, consecrating the moment, wordlessly.

Mamma-in-law comes in on tiptoe, carrying something wrapped in a blanket.

"Don't you want to see your son?" she asks.

Benedick gets up dubiously. He has not been thinking about the baby, because his mind has been too full of Beatrice. Mamma-in-law pulls aside a corner of the blanket, revealing the face of Benedick, junior. It is not much of a face, but there are enough indications of the necessary features to show that that is what it is intended to be. It is a sort of pink smudge wrinkled strangely.

"Isn't he bee-yutiful!" says mamma-in-law with rapture.

"Yes," says Benedick briefly. He lies, because Beatrice is listening. What he really is wondering is whether the baby will

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ever grow to look like a human being after all.

Mamma-in-law rocks from side to side, uttering low gurgling sounds and then the nurse comes in, the severity of her face melting curiously into smiles. For a brief moment she is not a nurse but just a woman. And then with a businesslike air she tells Benedick that his ten minutes have passed.

Benedick goes down, treading the stars, for the moment of exaltation lasts. He feels like rushing forth to the street and proclaiming the great news to Mrs. Silotti, who has shown a personal interest in his household. But he does not do so. His happiness is too deeply seated for that. "In-laws" enter, anxiously inquiring. Uncle William arrives in his machine, violating the eighteenth amendment. The "in-laws" drink Benedick's health and Beatrice's, and Uncle William, more than ever before exhaling good fellowship, claps him upon the back. But even this does not disturb Bene-

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dick. Uncle William is a trump and the eighteenth amendment can go hang for all that any of them care. It is indeed a fine world, full of amiable and good-hearted people.

When the good people go, Benedick sits down by the fire and smokes his pipe, thinking with a new kind of seriousness of the difference that the baby is to make in his life and Beatrice's. There are a great many problems to be faced by them both, and it is upon the correct solution of these problems that much of their happiness depends. Benedick has had his great moment. He decides that all the thoughts that come from it must be great also.

Wise Benedick! There are many young husbands who look upon the birth of a baby as a relief from the thralldom of many days of waiting, far from the amusements to which the pair are accustomed. To Benedick other matters are less important than the baby and the mother herself. He does not know yet what sort of a mother Beatrice

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is to make, but he believes from her conscientious sense of her duty in all other things, that she will do capably whatever is required of her. He makes a decision, however, that she shall have her wish to take entire charge of the child just so long as the duties do not wear upon her—but no longer. He has heard some vague talk among the women of the house as to the possibility of getting a “half-grown girl” to wheel the baby abroad and otherwise assist the mother. He knows that another servant, even “half-grown” will entail some sacrifices, and that it will be difficult for him, after the extraordinary expenses of the first year, to pay his way. But he resolves by hook or crook, to do so. He is beginning in all seriousness to realize that the costs of a household, once begun, never diminish. They are like a rash upon the body which, reduced in one place, breaks out in another.

But he is a good gambler as all young married men of moderate circumstances must be. And with the good gambler in

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games of chance the gods are all on his side. Something always happens to see him safely through the financial breach.

Meanwhile, for three weeks he has the pleasure of dining each night with the paragon of nurses. More even than mamma-in-law ever did, she dominates the household, holding Benedick perilous, at the point of the sword, keeping him, by this means, in his place, regulating his comings and goings to and from Beatrice with a discipline that may not be opposed. But he has ceased to dislike her. Why, he does not know, for she has even said that the pink smudge is the living image of his father. Perhaps, because, in spite of her grenadier manner she has proved herself to be indeed a paragon. She may not be fluffy, and she does not powder her nose; she is not a man's woman but with women she has a will and a way. Beatrice has become very much attached to her and even the cook, who is given to the prejudices of high temperatures, has yielded to her blandishments.

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The paragon has been discussed at some length because there is no single agency in a new household (with the possible exception of an explosion of the boiler), more fruitful of difficulties than an untrained trained nurse. Such a creature, brought haphazard into the bosom of a family, can do more havoc to happiness in a week than all the "in-laws" in all the world. She will vex the wife, insult the husband (or flirt with him) and cause the departure of the cook. She is chaos. Good nurses are born, not trained. The paragon does none of these things, because, in spite of her severity, she is a paragon.

It is another wonderful moment when Beatrice comes downstairs to dinner. Benedick, if he be thoughtful (and still a gambler) will have flowers of some sort upon the table. They may not be roses (for he might not be enough of a gambler for that), but flowers of some kind, the least expensive that may be found in the market. But they will suffice. To a wife it is the

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sentiment behind the gift that makes all flowers American beauties. Benedick may add another touch of sentiment by putting more flowers in Uncle William's yellow vase, and Beatrice will surely respond to these little tributes and remember them in the days to come. They are little items of affection entered to Benedick's credit on the domestic ledger of give and take.

Beatrice, representing every woman, is greatly influenced by the little incidents of married life, both the pleasant and the unpleasant. It is the little worries that sap the vitality, the little kindnesses that restore it to normal.

Beatrice, coming down to dinner for the first time in several weeks, enters upon a new world. All is changed. Before she sits at the table she goes to the mantel and moves a vase two inches to the right. This seems nothing at all, but it means a great deal. This is merely the impulse of the housewife, long restrained, seeking her responsibilities. But the action is significant

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to Benedick. Henceforth Beatrice returns to full dominion over the gods of the house and over him.

The paragon goes at last. But Beatrice does not recover her strength as rapidly as she might have done. She wants to do everything for the baby herself, for she has the mother instinct (perhaps inheriting some trace of materno-mania). She has even been jealous of the paragon's services to the baby and has taken up her own duties joyously with a sure sense that no one in the world, not even mamma-in-law, can care for the child as she can. She has followed the instructions of the doctor and the paragon with an avidity which does not know how to forget. And Benedick, junior, rewards her with the smiles of every growing confidence. He is such a lamb!

But Benedick sees that when night comes Beatrice begins to wear a tired look. She does not complain, for she is plucky. Before them both, if the baby is restless, perhaps, stretches a long night of wakefulness.

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It is a moment for great decisions. Gambler that he is, Benedick takes out of his pocket an envelope and upon its back makes some rapid calculations. It must be done—not the “half-grown girl” either. Another regular expense, but he can afford it. He *must* afford it.

After dinner he announces his intention to Beatrice.

She looks up from her knitting suddenly as though he had proposed a plot to dynamite the Washington Monument.

“Benedick!” she exclaims, “whatever made you think of that?”

“A nurse—a capable nurse to look after the baby by day. We’ll keep him at night, of course.”

“A nurse!” she mutters.

“Things look pretty bright downtown,” he says.

There is a silence and then, “But I couldn’t *think* of letting any one look after baby but me. They wouldn’t know how. He’s used to my ways.”

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"I want him to have a nurse," says Benedick calmly.

4

"Let us cultivate our garden." The phrase recurs as all great phrases must. Let us make a home, it says. Let us build. Let us prune the orchard that the fruit may grow abundantly. Let us plant the seeds of a great happiness, kill the little weeds of intolerance before they grow too great and water the roses of affection for the season may be short.

Benedick and Beatrice have begun well. They are at the high-tide of matrimonial success, for all marriages are successful when a baby is born. But they still have some difficulties to overcome, some instincts to independence instead of interdependence, the results of the many years in which each has been taught to think for himself. The garden, however, now enthralls them both, for presiding over its destinies, sits Benedick, junior. The garden must be made

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beautiful for the child. All of Beatrice's thoughts are for the boy and Benedick's for the boy through Beatrice. They venture out now from time to time in the afternoons or on Sundays to visit and in the afternoons sometimes to go to the motion pictures, but Beatrice is always hurrying home, for something might go wrong and Beatrice not be there to set it right.

Worldliness has not yet begun to make war upon the sentiment of the family, for they have resolutely turned their backs upon worldliness in the cultivation of their garden. They have not yet become like Georgiana Smith, for instance, whose home is already little more than a sort of half-way house between the country club and the theater, a place where she may sleep and sometimes eat. The world has called to Georgiana again, for Georgiana's baby is more than a year old. The Smiths have more money than Benedick and Beatrice have, and this makes it possible for them to have a greater independence from their

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home. They are light-hearted people and perhaps just a trifle light-headed. They are still young, they say. There will be plenty of time to stay at home later on. Beatrice is young too—so young, indeed, that her house is a kind of playhouse, the baby like the most beloved doll of her childhood. She does not know that Georgiana Smith has passed through this period, too, that the novelty has worn off, leaving her again dependent upon the world for her happiness.

But there is a different strain of blood in Beatrice, a strain of the provincial, of the bourgeoisie, not altogether eliminated by her contacts with the “nice” people of whom mamma-in-law has been so proud. She has inherited mamma-in-law’s sense of the sanctity of the home, her philosophy of “utility” which came before all the new-fangled notions that the later generation has brought into her life. Perhaps this inherent tendency will be strong enough even later to counteract the temptations that the world is offering to Georgiana Smith. To Beatrice,

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at this moment, her home is a shrine, with the baby, a little pink Buddha perched upon a pedestal, sagely contemplating his umbilicus. And to Benedick, who has sown some wildish oats in his time, it is a haven of rest and a sanctuary. He is proud of it, too, and intends that it shall bear the impress of a character grown strong through temptation.

They both have just now what the author of the simple life calls "the spirit of home." "Just as the smallest village may have its history, its moral stamp," Charles Wagner says, "so the smallest home may have its soul. Oh! the spirit of places, the atmosphere that surrounds us in human dwellings! . . . No sooner does the door shut you in than friendliness and good humor envelop you. It is said that walls have ears. They also have voices, a mute eloquence. Everything that a dwelling contains is bathed in an ether of personality."

This, for the present then, is the ideal for the new home, an atmosphere, a spirit, a personality. When the day is done, Bene-

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dick brings home books from the library on art, on culture, and on the "training of the child", books on physiology and hygiene; history, biography, which he reads aloud while Beatrice sews. And here and there a book of modern fiction. But they have touched, and are still touching, the sources of life, and no romance that they read is half so wonderful as their own.

They are no extraordinary pair, just a little above the average and willing to yield to their better tastes and impulses than to their baser ones. They understand that they must cultivate a community of taste in their garden, so that this daily evening association may become a real companionship. It is true that sometimes Beatrice yawns, and Benedick nods. But then, so does Homer.

"How dull!" Georgiana Smith may say. "And who was Homer anyhow? I would never have thought that Beatrice would ever become such a humdrum sort of a creature. And Benedick! who used to be the

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life of the party! I wonder if I could get them out to a dance at the country club!"

"Leave 'em alone," grunts Georgiana Smith's husband wearily as he gets into his evening clothes. "Let 'em go to sleep if they want to. I wish to heaven *I* could once in a while."

"How like a man!" says Georgiana petulantly. "You used to be bored to death every night before the baby came because there was nothing to do but go to sleep. Now when you can attend to your social duties you want to be going to sleep again."

But Benedick and Beatrice are indifferent to these comments though they must be aware of them. The time for the resumption of their social duties is not yet, for their duties to society are more important. There are no quarrels and few misunderstandings. It is the period of contemplation and peace. Much depends upon their capacity for contentment in the quiet atmosphere of the home. It is a mood to be cultivated and studied by young married folk, for it is upon

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this facility for contentment that the whole of their future hangs. Just outside their door are pleasure, gayety, excitement, and these they will seek in due time, but if they have not established in their own minds their need for these tranquil evenings in the home, the world will call them more and more until the "spirit of the home" will fly (perhaps taking love with it) out of the window.

5

No one denies that rational beings need diversion. It is as necessary to their minds as green vegetables to their bodies. The theater, the dance, and more particularly a game of some sort in the open air, are essentials to mental and physical well-being. After the long period during which she is housed, even the most cheerful and contented of women is subject to fits of introspection, moods only made more definite in the drudgery of household work. All women love to dance, for the dance is an expression of joy. As Balzac says, "The tempests of

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the heart break out when the limbs are at rest."

Beatrice must dance again, she must go to the theater more often, and she must play tennis. Benedick knows all this, and the phrase of Georgiana Smith's, voiced again and again by members of the family about "social duties," begins to assume a prophetic sound. It will not do for them to turn into a couple of hermits, of course. They will have to be going about again in the evenings as soon as it can be managed. Benedick is not bored in his evenings at home; he has even begun in his new philosophy of life to look upon the world as a swarming ant hill in a constant ferment. He knows that if they begin to go out at all, they will probably go out a great deal, and the idea of deserting the evening lamp after a tiresome day in town does not appeal to him. But he belongs to the same country club that Georgiana Smith's husband does, and there are his friends clamoring for him, and there are Beatrice's, clamoring for her. They

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will have to yield some time. He approaches Beatrice upon the subject.

"I think we ought to try to go to the dance at the country club, Bee. Don't you?"

She brightens visibly.

"The dance? If we could!" And then with a resolute sigh—"But of course it's impossible."

"Why?"

"Baby," she replies calmly. "He may wake up and cry."

"Suppose he does cry! It's good for his lungs."

This is an old if amiable contention between them. For Beatrice, disregarding the advice of the paragon, has made a great mistake. The paragon has told Beatrice very definitely that it is necessary in the training of the child not to lift Benedick, junior, out of the crib when he cries. Before the paragon has left the house the baby is trained to cry and go to sleep again. But left to her own devices, Beatrice has endured

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his tears during the intervals of one sleepless night and then has fallen victim to her own materno-mania. She has lifted the child from his crib.

The game is lost. Benedick, junior, at once aware of his victory, learns to cry whenever he wants to be lifted.

"His poor little lungs," says Beatrice. "I won't have him crying when I can stop him."

"And remain a martyr the rest of your life. He's a little tyrant already, I tell you."

"He's *not* a tyrant, and I won't have you calling him names," she says. "Even nurse lifts him."

"Of course she does. What else *can* she do, when you've trained him to cry to be lifted."

"Nurse has a kind heart, I'm glad to say," she says significantly.

"My dear Bee, things have gone from bad to worse. You lift him; nurse lifts him; your mother lifts him; the 'in-laws' lift him. It's a wonder he hangs together at all. At

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the rate you're spoiling him, in ten years he will be unfit to live with, at twenty he will be a bully, at twenty-five perhaps a traffic cop, at thirty—"

"Stop!" says Beatrice, "my son will never be a policeman."

"Well," says Benedick, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing," she replies calmly. "And I'm going to lift him just as often as I please."

"You mean," he says ironically, "as often as *he* pleases."

She stares at him reproachfully. "Benny, I didn't know that you could be so heartless."

"Well, who's going to lift him when you don't?"

"Nurse."

"But nurse lifts him all day. She can't be lifting him all night too."

"I haven't asked her to. She would leave. I won't ask her to."

Benedick knocks out his pipe with some asperity. "You mean that you're going to

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make yourself a prisoner here, night after night from now on, forever?"

"If necessary."

Benedick rises.

"You're not. I'm not going to have it. I'm not going to have you making a martyr of yourself any longer."

"How is it to be prevented?"

"I don't know." He is perplexed, but comes to the conclusion that he has chosen a wrong course. So he assumes the rôle of tempter.

"See here, Bee. I want you to go to that dance at the country club. Every one will be there—Henrietta, Georgiana, Carolyn and May, and Dick and Tom and Harry. They've got the A one orchestra, and the floor is perfect. There's a new jazz. It goes like this—"

And humming and moving his hands he steps lightly around the room. Salomé with her seven veils can not have been more tempting than he. Benedick is such a good dancer! Beatrice springs to her feet and

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together they whirl around. She is weakening fast.

"Oh, Benny, you *do* dance! A good floor and a good orchestra—"

"And a good jazz," says the tempter.

She falls. "I wonder if it could be managed," she gasps.

"Why not? There's the 'phone. If the baby wanted to be lifted, you could get here in twenty minutes—or less."

"I wonder if mother would come."

So, it is arranged. Mamma-in-law comes. Beatrice puts on a new ready-made frock bought for the occasion. She is very much excited and flushes prettily as she dresses. She feels like a young girl going to her first party. But not quite. At the last moment she rushes swiftly but silently into the room where the baby is sleeping, oblivious of his missed opportunity for a tyranny of tears. She feels like a traitor as she leaves him. It is the first evening that she has stolen away from him since he was born. Poor little lamb. He looks so helpless, so inno-

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cent. She steals to the top of the stairs and down to where Benedick, hatted and over-coated, impatiently waits.

Benedick makes some flattering comment on her appearance and they are saying good-by to mamma-in-law when, from the dark silence of upstairs comes a small sound, a cough, a moan and then very definitely, a wail. Benedick, junior, has awakened.

Beatrice and mamma-in-law each give a startled glance at Benedick and flee upstairs. Other footsteps are heard, as nurse rushes from her room. The three women converge upon the infant. It is a race to see who shall lift the tyrant first, but Beatrice is fleet of foot and wins, discarding cloak and gloves to the winds as she runs.

Benedick, downstairs, paces the floor. At last he lights a cigarette. If he could have squeezed Beatrice outside the door three seconds sooner—but what is the use of recriminations? The evening is ruined.

Meanwhile the hired “flivver” at the door coughs jerkily and at last stops. Benedick

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crosses the room with the idea of dismissing the vehicle when the sounds upstairs which have gradually diminished suddenly cease, and a hoarse whisper from mamma-in-law is heard from the top of the stair.

"She's coming, Benedick. He's asleep again."

And in a moment Beatrice, with a longing, lingering look behind her, comes slowly down.

"You're *sure*," she asks.

"Yes, dear. Have a good time," says mamma-in-law.

Nervously Benedick helps her on with her wrap and hurries her to the door, listening intently for the slightest sound overhead. There is none. He closes the door behind him, like a thief evading the police. The noise of the "flivver" now fortunately deafens Beatrice and regretfully she enters the vehicle, gazing at the dim light in the upper window where lies the creature that she is betraying.

But the sounds of revelry as they ap-

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proach the country club make her forget Benedick, junior. People are dancing and the sounds from the A one orchestra set her feet tingling even before she is upon the floor. They are there—all the old crowd—and they welcome Benedick and Beatrice with the heartiness of their kind. Beatrice dances with her husband, and the trombone and saxophone greet them with contrapuntal gymnastics. Men cut in and she dances with them all. Oh, how wonderful it is! It almost seems as though that other life that she has lived for more than a year was the dream and this the reality. But it is not so. She is dancing with Tom, something of a devil with the women—Tom, whom she had once thought she loved. Tom is telling her that she is so lovely that he can hardly believe that she can be married and have a baby, and Beatrice seems to listen, her eyes softly sympathetic. But at the mention of the word baby, she suddenly stops in the middle of the floor and relinquishes him.

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"What's the matter," he asks, alarmed. "Don't you feel well?"

"Yes, yes," she gasps. "But where's the telephone?"

Somewhat relieved he leads her to it, the old flame burning still, dull with regret. He has danced with a melancholy air, and the tones of his voice are deep with sentiment for the might have been.

What he hears at the telephone is this: "Hello mother! That you? Is the baby asleep? . . . He is? . . . You're sure? . . . He hasn't cried? . . . Not once? . . . Ah, I'm so glad . . . you'll call me, won't you? . . . I'll come right home. . . . Poor little lamb! . . . all right, good-by."

She emerges from the telephone booth, beaming joyously—but Tom knows that she is not beaming for him.

"I'm so sorry I interrupted you, but I was worried about the baby. What were you saying? Shall we sit this out?"

But Tom has lost all appetite for sentiment. They do sit it out, but Tom

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with great dignity now talks about the weather.

It is the same with Dick, later on. Dick is the medical student, who studied medicine instead of killing himself when Beatrice refused him. She talks with Dick in the shadowed grill-room. He avoids the topic that has been so personal to them both. Perhaps he is a little ashamed that he has not killed himself. He talks instead of the materia-medica and of wonderful operations. Her face is faintly illumined by the light from the ballroom. It wears a far-away look as though she were drinking in every word that he utters. He wonders if she has discovered the mistake that she has made. Perhaps she is not happy with Benedict. . . .

Suddenly she speaks: "Dick, I have the most wonderful baby. He's such a lamb. Do you like babies, Dick?"

He feels like making a paraphrase of the famous reply.

"Yes, I like 'em—*boiled*."

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But Dick is too polite, and only says, "Oh, yes. I do."

The current is broken, and when Beatrice gets up he follows to the dance floor willingly. To Beatrice something has happened to these young men. They are not the same young men. They say the same pleasant things with the same expressions, but what they say is strangely lacking in the importance that it used to have. She prefers to dance, for the joy of dancing does not seem to have changed so much. But even that. . . . She wonders where Benedick is. She realizes that she has not seen him for at least half an hour. She looks at her wrist watch. It is eleven o'clock—past her usual bedtime. She wonders if that is why she has already grown a little tired of the dancing. Her last partner, Harry, volunteers to help her hunt for Benedick and together they search the lower floor, finding him sitting with Uncle William in the card room. Uncle William is slapping Benedick upon the back and between them on the

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table is a silver flask and two glasses. "Well!" says Beatrice, "you seem to be having a good time—you two."

"We are," replies Uncle William jovially. "As the fellow says—'Let us eat, drink and be merry!'"

"I think it is time that we went home, Benedick," Beatrice breaks in calmly.

"But it is only eleven—"

"I think we ought to go. You know—mother—and the baby— Please 'phone for the car."

"Oh, all right."

Benedick rises amid protests from Uncle William, and Beatrice goes to get her wraps.

In the "flivver" Benedick yawns.

"It was a very nice party, wasn't it?" asks Beatrice.

"Yes, very." He yawns again.

"Why did you stop dancing so soon?" she asks again.

"Oh, I don't know. It was all right at first. But then—"

"What, Benny?"

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"I don't know. The girls weren't the same somehow. And then Uncle William came—"

Beatrice gives him her hand.

"Isn't it strange? I felt the same way. And then all the time I kept hearing the baby crying. I wonder if he's waked up. Do you think so, Benny?"

Benedick yawns again.

Perhaps they have grown stodgy—Beatrice from too frequent "lifting" of the baby, Benedick from too close an attention to the slipper and fireside habit. Beatrice is an unusually conscientious mother, and Benedick is playing the marriage game as he reads it in his instincts and in his conscience. For the moment they have let the world pass them by and regard it from their coign of vantage as a thing that is changed to them and unfamiliar. But it is the same world from which they took leave a few short months ago, the same crowd of people even. It is they that have changed.

Beatrice and Benedick have enjoyed

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themselves. If it had not been for the thought of the baby . . .!

A habit is stubborn—even the habit of contentment. But the world will call to them again—and they will listen. It will be less difficult for Beatrice to leave the baby the next time, less difficult again after that. Old tastes will revive, old friendships will resume their appeal, and new friendships commensurate with their growing place in society will be formed. The healthful diversions that they are seeking will perhaps very gradually and insidiously be changed from mild amusements into gayety, excitement and dissipation in which the habit of contentment will be forgotten, for this is the way of worldliness.

Let us see.

V

WORLDLINESS

I

THE British Royal Commission on divorce has presented evidence that the eighth is the most dangerous year in the adventure of marriage. The statistics are so noteworthy that Sir Philip Gibbs has made them the subject of a book, Mr. Pinero the subject of a play, and the learned psychologists of the Empire have turned their minds to an attempt to find some reason for the frequency of divorces in the fatal eighth year.

The query naturally arises, why the eighth year, rather than the sixth or the ninth or the thirteenth or any other year? Eight years is a long period of time, long enough, one might say, for two young people to

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pass safely over the rocks and shoals (even bumping slightly) into the harbor of contentment; or else to have managed to bring their craft to wreck much sooner.

In his demonstration of a typical case of a marriage ending in divorce in the fatal year, Sir Philip impels one of his characters to work out the explanation: In the first and second years a wife is absorbed in the experiment of marriage and in the sentimental phases of love. In the third and fourth years she begins to study her husband and to find him out. In the fifth and sixth years, having found him out she makes a working compromise with life and tries to make the best of it. In the seventh and eighth years she begins to find herself out. The result of this introspection is divorce.

It would be interesting to discover from the experience of the divorce courts in this country what year is the most fatal to American marriage. Here, doubtless one year would be enough in each of these psychological processes for the average American girl,

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who is quite sharp enough to arrive at her conclusions more rapidly (and carelessly) than her English cousin. One year for sentiment, then; two to find out her husband; three for the working compromise; and four for introspection and divorce. A comprehensive schedule, indeed, for the young wife who has been trained to consider herself to the exclusion of every one else and leading with surprising definiteness to that independence without which she cannot be contented.

But these statistics, very thorough, as most things British are, reveal the interesting fact that the great majority of the women seeking release are childless wives. They have in the first years, for one reason or another, evaded the responsibility of children, who would have complicated their domestic plans or fitted uncomfortably into the economic or social scheme. Some of these unfortunate women have a child—sometimes two children, but these are, in most cases, the wives who have had no natural desire

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for motherhood; and the husbands who are willing to thrust the children into the nursery where they are left to the care of incompetent and unsympathetic servants. For such husbands and wives, the schedule of Sir Philip seems almost inevitable. And while children may not be an enduring pledge of fidelity to the sacramental vows of the marriage contract, they are links in the chain of sentiment, interesting if not tender objects of affection to help fill the void in the heart of the selfish or discontented woman or man.

The British records also reveal the fact that discontent upon the part of the wife usually begins when she hires a second servant and so begins to find useful time lying heavy on her hands; that prosperity on the part of the husband leads to the kind of snobbishness that is only another word for discontent; that the fatal eighth year applies to England's great middle class and is never heard of in the Poverty Court, and less frequently among the rich and titled

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who usually have more at stake in money, or repute.

It has been said that Beatrice is of no unusual type, that she is as nearly as possible the norm, neither poor nor rich, and that Benedick is the normal clever business man, with a promising future before him as all ambitious Americans must have. The pair have passed successfully the experimental phase and have already jogged down into a comfortable frame of mutual understanding and sympathy, greatly helped by Benedick, junior, who forms a blood-tie between them. Benedick, senior, has been impatient at the lifting of the child from the crib whenever he has cried, and perhaps slightly jealous over the attentions lavished upon him by Beatrice to the exclusion of her husband. But unless he is a fool, no man will long be jealous of his own child, for he is then merely jealous of himself. And Benedick realizes this fact at the end of a long evening which Beatrice has spent upstairs talking to the nurse about the symptoms of baby diseases

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while Benedick, bored at being left so long alone, has at last gone to sleep by the fire. But of course it is his baby as well as Beatrice's who will have baby diseases, and it is Beatrice's duty to find out as much about them as she can. So, though the evening is spoiled for him, Beatrice's explanations are quite satisfactory. She is, he understands, most conscientious.

But the pair are, nevertheless, approaching the period of married life which is to be the test of their eventual destinies. For want of a better phrase it shall be called the testing time. Balzac calls it the red moon that follows the honeymoon, because red is the color token of war. It is in this period that Beatrice studies Benedick and becomes aware of his slightest idiosyncrasies: in this period that Benedick finds that Beatrice behind the scenes is quite capable of unpleasant moments, in spite of her pretty face. He takes down his copy of *Virginibus Puerisque* given him before marriage by his Aunt Imogen and reads: "When a young lady

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has angelic features, eats nothing to speak of, plays all day long upon the piano, and sings ravishingly in church, it requires a rough infidelity, falsely called cynicism, to believe that she may be a little devil after all." He smiles, for he knows that devil and Beatrice are many miles asunder, but he has to admit that she has made a waspish comment on his confession to taking lunch at a restaurant in town with Georgiana Smith.

But there is no war—just a slight rebellion from time to time or a skirmish along the border of their domestic commonwealth where shots are fired at an invisible foe like Georgiana, but no damage is done. A period of unrest, less on Benedick's part than Beatrice's. For Benedick after his day in town is quite content to settle down for the evening.

Most men, with occupations not nearly as interesting as Benedick's, are so bored at nightfall by the daily round of their stupid business activities, that they are rather relieved than oppressed at the prospect of an

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evening at home. But the evening at home as a source of enjoyment is not now so impressive to Beatrice. She has been at home most of the day. As a place, it lacks novelty, as an entertainment it lacks variety. For there by the lamp sits Benedick, smoking his pipe, reading or writing, and only talking to her when she provides the topic of conversation and then only in the briefest phrases. Or else sleeping. Benedick's features relaxed are not nearly as good looking as when he is awake. And when he snores, as he does when he is very tired, he is little less than idiotic. The intelligence of Beatrice, on the contrary, is more keenly alive than at any time during the day. She has had her moments of rest and relaxation between chores and perhaps a nap. Her mind is ripe for discussion or for argument. She questions Benedick as to what has happened downtown and when Benedick has told her, there is nothing more to tell. She relates volubly the prosaic history of the day, and Benedick makes perfunctory comments. But there is

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no life in him. He is tired. Time was when she would settle down beside him, holding his hand, aware of his weariness and of her ability to soothe him by her touch and to help him to relax by gentle words interspersed with significant silences. But she does not think of him now as an object of sympathy or commiseration for she, too, is weary, though in a different way. She is weary of herself and of her conversations with the nurse and with the cook. If the baby does not awaken, she sits beside Benedick and knits, awaiting his yawn which she knows is the first signal of distress which leads to bed. It is only nine o'clock. Beatrice does not want to go to bed at nine o'clock. She would like to talk about many things, interesting things, if Benedick would only talk to her about them. He used to be entertaining when he wanted to be. He used to read books to her in the first year of marriage and then they would discuss them. But now when he remains awake, the work that he brings home from the office is very

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absorbing, important work, with which she may not interfere.

And so Beatrice knits—an occupation designed to keep women's fingers busy, but making no provision for the occupation of their minds. Knitting was without doubt originally intended as a device for mild and comfortable old ladies with no minds for the problems of life, so that it did not matter a great deal what they thought about. It was an occupation practiced during the war by the young as well as the old as an act of patriotism, and since the war as a useful habit difficult to overcome. Knitting should only be practiced by the old and harmless, for it is an art which leaves the mind completely at the mercy of the imagination. And unless she talks as she knits, the knitter is thrown inward upon her own mental resources. A woman thinks twice as hard while she is knitting as at any other time, and the more rapidly her fingers move, the more tensely she thinks. She is unaware of this introspection, for her mind flits nimbly

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from one thought to another, quite without discipline or direction, choosing, too often, her prejudices, her dislikes, her little martyrdoms and magnifying them all, without knowing the damage that she is doing to her common sense. If Job with all his troubles had been addicted to knitting, nothing could have saved him from dashing out his brains against a stone.

Beatrice, though a knitter, has never been thoroughly given to the subjective. By the nature of this discourse she must be quite normal. She, therefore, stops knitting suddenly when Benedick awakes, surprised and just a little startled at the racing of her mind and the unpleasant lengths to which its thoughts have carried her. For, ignoring Benedick and her adored son upstairs, she has been transporting herself out of her house, into a world where gay women are playing bridge, dancing, flirting, and otherwise expressing their irresponsibility and independence. In this mad rush of imagination to keep up with her quick, skillful

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fingers, she has traveled abroad—to London, to Paris, to Monte Carlo, listened to delightful music, seen the blue of the Mediterranean touched here and there with the bright color of smart frocks, with deeper notes in the background where dark, handsome, interesting men move to and fro whispering things most flattering and pleasant to hear.

And all the while that Beatrice has made this wonderful and startling pilgrimage Benedick has been asleep in his armchair, his head lolling to one side, his mouth sagging open unpleasantly! She knows that he is tired, that his promotion at the office has increased his responsibilities, but why should he be more obliged to go to sleep now than when they were first married, and he worked just as hard? She resents his ability to go to sleep in the evenings now leaving her alone with her thoughts. If he only knew how ridiculous he looked—with his mouth sagging open, like an idiot or a drunken man! While her fingers resume the clicking needles, she thinks of other personal pe-

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cularities, little persistent tricks of habit, which for a long while have been slightly on her nerves—that queer way of sniffing through his nose when he laughs, for instance. . . .

Edna Ferber relates the story of a young wife who loved her commonplace husband very dearly. But he had an ungraceful way of flapping his right elbow every morning just before he chipped the top of the shell of his boiled egg. That flap of the elbow became a part of her life, became an obsession, so that she watched him every morning, fascinated—her nerves tortured, afraid that if he did it again something would give way, and that she would scream. At last the innocent husband flapped his elbow once too often, the wife screamed and fled the house.

Some women are like that. They will work like slaves, endure the pains of childbirth, of poverty and monotony, until some little thing gets on their nerves. It may be a flap of the husband's elbow, as he opens his egg, or a way that he uses his handkerchief,

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or a tune that he hums while shaving, or merely a way of sniffing through his nose when he laughs—like Benedick. But there it is, a harmless habit that annoys, that irritates, and at last conquers by its persistence like the dropping water that wears away the stone.

The woman in Edna Ferber's story had a habit, too, when she was worried about anything, of putting her spoon in the coffee cup, filling it with coffee and then without touching it, emptying it out again. But the husband, being made of sterner stuff, did not scream or grow hysterical. When the repentent wife came back to him, he told her of *her* little habit that had annoyed him, and she saw how splendid he had been, and they lived happily together forever after.

Beatrice knows, of course, that she must love Benedick very dearly, or she would not have considered him so carefully in all of her plans. Perhaps she had not loved him so much at first as later, when he had given her so great a devotion and when Benedick,

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junior, was born. But subtly things have changed. He takes her too much as a matter of course, like his easy chair or his dressing gown. She, too, has ceased to feel his presence as the conclusive boon of an expectant day. He is little more than a part of the easy chair or of the dressing gown. She is a little worried at her thoughts—aware that she must experience a new emotion of some sort or that the living spark within her will by slow degrees be extinguished.

Benedick does not know all this, or he would quickly lay aside the work that he has brought home from the office and make love to her as he used to do, for this, after all, is perhaps what she requires. He does not know that the love of romance is never dead in the heart of a woman, even though she be a wife and only her husband its proponent. Benedick does not think much of romance now, except the romance of business which, as he grows more successful, is becoming the greatest romance in the world. If Beatrice

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were to tell him that she wanted to be made love to, he would probably consider it as a reasonable proposition and suit the action to the word. But Beatrice makes no such suggestion. If the thought does not come naturally to Benedick, she will be the last one in the world to suggest it. Things of that sort, she surmises, are of the heart and if they are not in Benedick's heart it would be folly to try to put them there.

And Benedick, immersed in planning an advertising campaign (an "ad" *captandum vulgus*), is very far from following what is in the thoughts of Beatrice. He does not know that being a woman and still young she hates to relinquish the thought of romance, and that she would like, if possible, to have the love comedy played over again from the beginning. But Benedick has the distaste of the normal young American for anything that savors of artificiality or hypocrisy and would no more think of employing the honeyed phrases of his courtship at this pleasant moment of connubial contentment

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than he would think of abusing his good wife for her many virtues.

A story is told of an unromantic and hard-working American husband who, by some fortunate accident of thought, happened to remember on his way home that this was his wife's birthday. She had been a good wife, as hard-working as he, and had borne him many children. So he decided to try to think of her with greater gentleness and to make her some belated and obtrusive attentions. So he stopped at a florist's and bought a large bouquet of roses which he took home to her. He sought her out eagerly, gave her the bouquet, threw his arms about her and kissed her tenderly. But she only stared at him a moment, and drew away from him crying bitterly.

"John!" she sobbed in dismay. "The boiler in the kitchen has sprung a leak; the cook has left; the baby has the measles and now *you*—you've come home drunk!"

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And so, there comes a slight rift within the lute. The busy (or the sleepy) Benedick is unaware of the fact that it does not sing as sweetly as it used to do. But Beatrice has the keener ear. If more sentimental, she is also really more intelligent than Benedick. She wants to get everything out of life that life has to offer, and she does not propose that she shall be cheated out of it by the banalities and stupidities of the daily round of duty. She has a mind aboveutton, and she intends that it shall be provided with a suitable sustenance. Benedick, still showing a disinclination for society, she decides to cultivate her intellect. She, therefore, reads while Benedick works (or sleeps)—romantic novels first, then “realistic” novels, in which the problems of American wives are worked out with morbid elaborateness by middle-aged divorced ladies who have already been the victims of their own philosophy. Beatrice learns to revel in the

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“problem” of marriage, which, as every one knows, is no problem at all but just common sense, tintured very slightly with unselfishness. She discovers the Russians—and Ibsen, putting herself into the shoes of the heroines of the plays and reading meanings into her own life that were never put into it by her Creator. She also takes an interest in the emancipation of woman. In this she is abetted by her own Aunt Caroline, the “advanced” member of her family who comes to lunch bringing books which she and Beatrice discuss with great enthusiasm. It is all very wonderful to Beatrice and opens a new vista of the future, a new opportunity to manifest her individuality in the kind of work that independent and clever women may do in the world. There is work, too, to be done in Community Centers, in Well Baby Clinics, in the Americanization of Foreigners—infinite possibilities in every direction to be of service to humanity.

But, in spite of Benedick, junior, who is

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not in the least neglected, these various activities tend to give her a life of her own in which Benedick, senior, is less and less considered. It is not necessary of course that this should be so, for there is no reason why her new obligations should in any way affect or modify the completeness of their understanding. But Beatrice is still young, and has not yet mastered the science (as she will master it later) of running successfully a three-ringed circus. And besides, she is a little provoked at Benedick, who refuses to take her new occupations in life with any great seriousness. The Liberation of Women, to him, is just a large abstraction. The young girls that he sees downtown upon the streets, the way they dress, the things they do, are concrete examples of liberty turned to license. The larger aspects of Beatrice's new philosophy have escaped him. For Benedick is, unfortunately, old-fashioned—so far from being abreast of the times, indeed, that he still thinks that the place of the woman is in the home, and that

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with the privileges that they assume they must also assume the obligations.

Old-fashioned? Yes, but normal in a growing young business man who has no time to read John Stuart Mill, or Havelock Ellis. Benedick is not an "intellectual" or a philosopher except in the matter of writing advertisements that will make the people buy the things that they do not want or require. So the interest that he takes in Beatrice's busy afternoons is merely mild, tempered slightly with a good-natured amusement. He does not realize that Beatrice is desperately in earnest, and that she insists upon being taken seriously. Nor does he realize that Beatrice is establishing a habit of thought that is leading her farther and farther afield. He only knows that he has prospered and that with the housemaid that Benedick has provided she will have plenty of time to devote to whatever she pleases. He thinks that in thus emancipating her from her household duties he is doing the necessitous and generous thing. He does

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not consider the wisdom of this generosity. He is merely doing what every other American husband does as soon as he can afford it, for it is the custom of the country that the men shall absolve their women, if possible, of any onerous responsibility; one of the vast and growing mass of immunities of which Mr. Mencken speaks "culminating of late years, in the astounding doctrine that under the contract of marriage, all the duties lie upon the man and all the privileges appertain to the woman." In theory, Benedict may not approve of the Liberation of Women, but in fact he liberates Beatrice so that after the ordering and the shopping are done, she has the entire day at her disposal.

Of course the further result of this prosperity and consequent freedom is the desire on Beatrice's part to extend the acquaintances that she has made in various directions with purposes less utilitarian and more social. She finds that her capability and her appearance are much admired by the women

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that she meets and by their husbands, cousins, brothers, and sons. She has, it appears, climbed some rungs of the social ladder while scarcely aware of them.

On the plea that "it will be an excellent thing for his business," she leads Benedick forth into these new fields that she now intends to conquer. Why shouldn't she and Benedick go out into the world instead of dozing every night at home by the fire? They are both young, why should they not be socially ambitious also? After the first venture or so, and after Benedick has been admonished to order a new suit of evening clothes since his old one has grown too tight for him, he finds that he is rather enjoying the acquaintanceship of the new crowd into which Beatrice has introduced him.

These people are, as a rule, wealthier than most of his old friends, with social positions upon the fringes of the socially great. They live in fine houses in the city and country, keep butlers, and limousines, and Pekingese pups. He realizes that Beatrice has

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made distinct social progress. These seem to be very nice people, the women not in the least highbrow as he thought they might be, but amiable and some of them rather good looking. There is a great deal of drinking and card playing and occasionally a private dance at a hotel in town or at some country club. But Beatrice no longer rushes to the telephone to inquire after the welfare of Benedick, junior, for the baby has now grown beyond the need of such anxieties and their new nurse, thanks to Benedick, is quite capable of mastering any situation that the young tyrant may impose.

Beatrice is now in her element and going strongly. She has always had the social instinct and recovers her technique with the speed of the virtuoso who has been long confined to a sick bed. This is the life. She wonders (like Georgiana Smith), how she could for such a long time have endured the stodginess of those evenings by the fireside. She has a good head for cards and usually wins. Her joy in the dance comes back to

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her, and she is much desired at afternoon tea tables where philanthropy, the privileges of women, and the latest morsel of scandal, are bandied across the damask as lightly as a shuttlecock. She learns the uses of the social volte-face, the quip suggestive, and the flattering unction of the smile. She is not so sincere as she used to be, but she is not aware of this deficiency. She wears clothes that become her, and her hats are more costly than they look.

She sees little of Georgiana Smith. Georgiana was always a little too much of the "good fellow" sort to fit comfortably into a company less demonstrative—not "common" exactly, just loud and hearty, with a tendency to make herself conspicuous. Beatrice assures herself again and again that she is not snobbish in the least—that Georgiana's noisy playfulness is all rather good fun and that she would be delighted to be on good terms with Georgiana whenever they meet. But they do not meet.

One can be just as snobbish over the pos-

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session of a new lawn mower as over a highly-priced limousine; over a new set of ideas as over a new set of friends; over a new opportunity as over the Carnegie Medal for a heroism accomplished. But the most fatal form of snobbishness, from which few human beings are immune, is the wish to go the pace of one's financial betters—fatal because it is so human and so strongly fused with the laudable virtue of ambition.

This sort of snobbishness grows with what it feeds upon and leads from one extravagance to another, from one worldliness to another. If any one had told Beatrice that she was snobbish, extravagant or even worldly, she would have been highly indignant. To Beatrice, worldliness has always meant nothing less than the flesh and the devil, neither of which has ever greatly tempted her. In corners behind palms men have made love to her, affording her some pleasant new twinges of vanity and not a little amusement. But that is all. She has a wholesome appetite for good food, but she

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does not eat too much, and wine or cocktails are the incident but not the aim of her existence.

3

Nevertheless when compared with the Beatrice that Benedick has won and married, the new Beatrice is both snobbish and worldly. And Benedick, falling under the spell of the gayety into which they are plunged, follows on, sacrificing a great deal of sleep at night, and aware that his income, though growing, is taxed to keep up with the game. He, too, has the germ with which Beatrice has been inoculated. He has made some new and valuable acquaintances but none who has contributed a dollar to his business. That does not matter, since he is gaining prestige of another sort which will help him some day, perhaps, to establish a great business of his own. All of this seems reasonable enough, a plausible excuse for spending more money than they can really afford. For there are the payments upon

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the new house to be made, a larger house in a less stuffy neighborhood, the equity bought at a bargain with the savings of Benedick's bachelor days. But the interest on the mortgage is considerable, and the careful budget of the year's expenses does not provide very much in the way of extras for the luxuries that they are now enjoying.

At last on one of the few evenings that they have recently spent together, Beatrice speaks of a new evening dress that she needs for a large dance to which they have been invited.

"You know I haven't a thing to wear," she says. "And it's a perfectly darling frock—only a hundred and twenty dollars."

"Nothing to wear." Benedick has heard this phrase before and has begun to understand its connotations. He knows that it does not mean that Beatrice will be obliged to go to the dance with nothing on, but merely that the other evening frocks (per-

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fectly good evening frocks as far as his poor masculine eye can see) have been seen before by those same people upon other occasions and of course must not be seen again upon Beatrice. By this time he understands quite well that the minds of all women work in the same groove where clothing is concerned and that Beatrice insists on conveying to the other persons invited to the dance the proud claim that she is as well able to afford a new dress as Mrs. Theophilus Jackson, for instance, whose husband has an income of sixty thousand a year. Beatrice knows that this boast is a vain one, and she knows that Mrs. Theophilus Jackson and her crowd know it, but she persists in the deception, overcoming any mental reservations she may have as to the facts of the matter by a kind of self-hypnotism which puts her upon a financial and social equity with the proud and wealthy lady by the mere act of wearing a new dress. It is pure snobbishness, of course, and Benedick is the sufferer.

“Nothing to wear,” he says. “One might

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suppose, my dear, that you had no dinner dresses at all."

Beatrice sits up straight.

"I haven't—not a rag."

"The blue, the green, the pink, the yellow—"

"Benedick!"

"Four at least. Or is it five?" he says calmly.

"But I can't wear those. I've worn them everywhere. Everybody has seen them."

"But you look so handsome in them—especially the pink."

She sees through his feeble subterfuge at once, and he knows that she sees through it. It is so obvious that she does not even dignify it by a reply, only smiling at him over her newspaper.

"The new dress will be mauve," she says calmly.

Benedick frowns suddenly, then gets up and takes a few paces along the hearth rug. The evil moment that he has too long put aside must now be faced.

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"We've been spending too much money, Beatrice," he says quietly.

If his manner had not warned her, his use of her full Christian name instead of the shorter familiar one must have let her know that there were weighty matters on his mind.

"We've had a good time—but we've got to stop. This crowd we're going with flies too high for us. I've intended to speak of this before. I've some very heavy expenses to meet. I can't run up any more bills, and you can't either. I'm sorry. I'm afraid you can't have that new dress."

Beatrice lays down her newspaper and stares at him.

"Don't you think it would have been wiser if you'd told me this before—before I'd accepted that invitation?" she says slowly.

"You seemed to be having such a good time. I'm just warning you. We've been living beyond our income. We've got to retrench. We've got to begin at once—"

"And so you think you'd better begin on my new dress," she says ironically. "Why

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not on your golf—your luncheons at expensive restaurants in town with friends—”

“With customers,” he corrects her coolly. “And my golf club is your country club, too.”

“Oh, very well,” she says with a shrug, “but if I can’t have the dress, I can’t go to the dance.”

“Bee, you know that’s nonsense. Your pink dress—”

“I’ve worn it to *everything*. It’s positively in rags. Besides, I’ve already *bought* the mauve dress,” she confesses. “They’re making some changes in it.”

“Without consulting me?” he asks. This is the first time that she has done this, and it shows him how far they have gone asunder in their mad race to keep up with their wealthy acquaintances. But there is such a definite reproof in his voice that she feels the blood mounting to her brow. Perhaps she is the more angry, since she knows that she is in the wrong. She rises nervously.

“You needn’t use that tone of voice to

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me," she says angrily. "You might think I'd done something criminal. How was *I* to know that you weren't making money enough!"

"I *have* made money enough," he retorts. "Twice as much as when we were married. We had enough then. We'd have enough now if you hadn't insisted on running with a lot of millionaires."

This is not quite fair of him. The burden of their difficulty is as much his as hers, but he is beyond reasoning. He has not liked her saying that he has not made money enough, especially as he has done so well downtown—so much better than either of them had ever hoped he would do. They are at cross purposes—both inflamed and antagonistic. They have been at cross purposes before, have quarreled, have fenced with words; but gently with buttons on their foils in a kind of game. This quarrel rising so suddenly, from so little, amazes and shocks them both. It is not so much what has been said that shows them the gulf that has grown

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between them, as the manner of the saying and the growing misunderstanding that could have made such an intolerance possible.

"*My* friends!" she laughs ironically. "*You* seemed on very good terms with Betty Williams in the billiard room at the Jacksons' the other night."

"Nonsense," he gasps. "You don't have to accuse *me* of anything just to square your conscience for the way you've been carrying on with Billy Harrison—the fastest man in that whole crowd."

"He isn't fast. He's perfectly sweet to me. And that's more than I can say for *you*."

"Hmf! Sweet! I guess he is. That's his long suit where women are concerned. But I'd like to say—now that we've suddenly reached this point—that you're making yourself conspicuous—that you have the boy to consider even if you won't consider me."

"Who has been talking about me?" she

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cries, flaring up still more angrily. "Betty Williams!"

"No, you're mistaken. Miss Williams is too kind hearted to say anything mean about anybody."

"Kind hearted!" Beatrice laughs unpleasantly. "So is a cat if you stroke it the right way. And I'd like you to understand that I'm quite capable of looking after my own affairs."

"Oh, *are* you! Well, I'm not so sure of that—not when you lose your head the way you've been doing lately. Your whole attitude shows it. Just because I tell you that I'm too poor to let you get that new dress!"

He turns his back and walks to the mantel taking down his pipe. He is angry at Beatrice but more amazed at his own capacity for recrimination. Something has gone wrong between them. Where did the trouble begin? Is it a part of the excitement of the high speeds at which they have been moving or just the nervousness and irritability born of discontent? He had begun the

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conversation seriously, but amiably, too, and it had waxed suddenly, without warning, into this open war with bitter words as weapons. She had touched his pride, as she had meant to do when she had said he had not made money enough. She had not studied him all these months without learning how to hurt him. And he—he had picked unerringly her one friendship that might be susceptible of a dubious interpretation.

He feels the gaze of Beatrice boring into the middle of his back as he fills and lights his pipe, but she says nothing at the moment. The kindly tobacco soothes him, makes him even sorry that he has spoken so harshly, so brutally, for this after all is Beatrice his wife, the mother of Benedick, junior.

His anger is burnt out. So, apparently, is hers. But the situation is too grave even for tears. He hears her moving toward the door where she turns.

"Unfortunately I've ordered the new dress," she says tensely. "If you'll pay for

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it, you can take it out of my allowance.” And with that she disappears.

Benedick does not follow. He has some thinking to do. So has she. But it is thinking that they must do apart—thinking, not so much about the mauve dress, or about Billy Harrison, or Betty Williams, but about the real enemy to their happiness that has come into their household. The world with its temptations, its ambitions, and its frivolities has followed them within the door. It now occupies the house and sits with them at the fireside so that they are ill at ease and discontented alone in each other’s company. “Come away,” it says, “this is no place to spend an evening when just outside are gayety, mischief, and enchantment. Youth was meant to be carefree and irresponsible. What matters the future when the present offers all that you crave? There is no such a thing as contentment in a place like this. It is dull, frowsy, prosaic. You will grow old before your time. Come away! Come away!”

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Benedick smokes, thinking deeply, then goes to his desk and looks over his bills. Upstairs Beatrice sinks into her armchair and sits pale and frowning. Like Benedick she wonders how it all has happened. She has had no idea that their affairs were so black as Benedick has painted them. He should have spoken of them before but kindly, gently—and not like this. . . . He has been worried, of course. And it *was* an extravagance so late in the season to order that *mauve* dress without speaking to Benedick.

At last her frown relaxes, and she goes into the room where Benedick, junior, lies sleeping, leaning over him for a long while.

This is the general formula for the domestic quarrel during the testing time. Its cause is usually financial. If Beatrice is plain, there is perhaps no Billy Harrison, or if Benedick is unattractive to women, no Betty Williams. But it is a pretty quarrel whatever its origin and rather desperate, suggesting possibilities for the future of their household that are far from pleasant.

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If Benedick harbors resentments, the next day will begin cloudy and again end in storms. If Beatrice has a "single track mind" and continues to claim the right of way for the object of her ambition, she will not care to think of Benedick and of her dull duty to abide by his position and opportunities. Admiration, self-love will claim her—and the result will perhaps be shipwreck for the fine craft that set forth so bravely three years ago upon the wide sea of life.

The weight of a hair, almost, will tilt the balance of the scale toward happiness or toward misery! Each is intelligent enough to observe that it is a moment for wise decisions. One, two or even three years ago these decisions would have been made at once, only the formality of the proper subterfuges separating the pair from kiss and embrace. But the words of their quarrel are too bitter to be lightly considered, the manner of their utterance too cynical and heartless to be passed over without due consideration. Beatrice is a little frightened at the

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width of the abyss that has been hewn between them. She stands upon the brink, hands to breast, aware of grave peril. Something that she has greatly loved has been removed from her. An idea—an ideal—something more even than these—a reality—now moving away from her among the shadows at the far side of the breach. . . . Benedick—all that he has been to her, all that he was to have been. She is bewildered. Is she to let her happiness go, the happiness of complete understanding, pride, and affection? For what? What is this abyss that has come between them? How did it get there so suddenly? Curious—that she had not observed. . . . Whose fault that it is there . . . his or hers? What does it matter? They must cross . . . to each other.

It is most often with the woman that this decision rests. Of the two she is the more sensitive vessel, the more tactful by training and inclination. If she is too proud and too headstrong, God help them both, for in a battle of love and self-will, it is love that is

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the loser. And against pride and self-will the spoken word is of little avail. For women are so used to the softly spoken word that in the stress of a tense situation they are intolerant of it. In their pride they are intolerant, too, of the physical touch, for here, they know, is their weakness in a quick reaction of petulance or of tears, both confessions of the frailty they are trying so hard to hide. A man, upon the contrary, perhaps, indeed, because he is nearer to the brute, may be calmed in his wildest rages by a soothing touch or a word.

If Beatrice is wise, the hour that she has alone with her thoughts will be enough to solve her difficulties—and Benedick's. He will come upstairs, heavily, dully, in an abstracted mood, ready with contrition for his part in the affair and not knowing just how to express it. This is Beatrice's great moment—as great a moment, though she may not realize it, as when, in suffering, she bore him his son. If she sulks they are lost, for the moment may pass and with its passing

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new opportunities will not be so significant. She need not speak if she fears a show of weakness. Just outstretched arms . . . for his will be waiting for her. . . . And then perhaps merciful tears, ungrudgingly given now, of tenderness and compassion.

"Oh, Benny dear," she whispers, "what has happened to us?"

"Nothing, Bee," he says gently, "except that some weeds have grown up in our garden."

"I know. Some of them had such pretty blossoms. I thought they were flowers."

"We will know them the next time. But we must not let them grow again, Bee dear."

VI

READJUSTMENT

1

HAVING passed through the baby diseases of marriage and an illness or two that may have had possibilities for fatality, Benedick and Beatrice now have reached a marital pubescence which entitles them to serious consideration as permanent partners in life. The testing time for the moment has passed, the red moon, like the honeymoon has set and they have resumed more placidly their way upon the road. There will be more moments to test them both, stiff climbs over rugged hillsides, sharp descents into unpleasant declivities, and dim passages through dark places where their vision may not be always clear. But they are now more sure of foot, more confident of their ability to conquer new hazards

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without mishaps; for they have seen the danger of the high places, and noted the warning signals placed for them by other travelers less wary, or less intelligent than they, along the road.

Perhaps the cynical will say that Benedick and Beatrice have now devised a "working compromise"—a phrase that in itself suggests a constant state of physical and mental suppression. A compromise there surely must be, for compromise is the soul of all reasonable human intercourse. But by compromise one does not mean the relinquishment of individuality or of opinion but merely a respect for the individuality and opinions of others. Nothing could be more dull than an existence in which two people always agree. Nothing stimulates an interest in others like the discovery that one may possibly be in the wrong; and when life ceases to present new problems for solution one may consider one's self laid safely upon the shelf. Individuality is not compromised by acts of kindness or even of acquiescence,

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which may in themselves be the tokens of strength rather than recession. And the wisdom that comes so slowly to young married couples now gives Benedick and Beatrice a perspective on their life together, so that each can see more clearly his own faults and thus be more tolerant of the faults of his mate. If this be a "working compromise," then let the phrase pass for a definition. Those graceful reticences of Benedick and Beatrice seem much more like common decency and common sense.

Some one has said that good manners are merely "surface Christianity," the expression of tolerance and good will. There! The word has come at last! Good will! Something better even than good intentions, for the best intentions in the world will sometimes go awry without the friendliness and affection that should accompany them. Good will—the urge to coöperation and understanding, the instinct to seek the better elements in a dubious situation rather than the worse, the sway of the memory of great

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moments which make the little faults of no account. Good will is God's will. Without it, the descent into the hell of intolerance is easy.

If one instructs, the much despised platitude persists, because its utterance is only a dull way of speaking the truth. All science, all philosophy, all religion are based upon the platitude. And all happy marriage is based upon common sense, aided by the friendliness that comes of a real companionship. The future seems to hold this promise to the younger generation, for the boy and girl of to-day hold a franker relationship than was dreamed of in the days of their fathers. They play golf and tennis together, learning in the rigors of these games much more about one another in the course of an afternoon than their fathers and mothers could have learned during a month in the period of the formal party and supervised amusement, when a girl was taught only to show her graces and the boy to put his best foot forward. The companionship of such a

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pair was stilted and sophistical, and when they married they were just at the beginning of the period of self-revelation, which resulted too often in disillusionment.

If there is hazard in the frank relationships of the boys and girls of to-day, it is more than compensated for by the common sense and companionships of the great number of young people who live in the open, learning thereby a frankness and honesty that will in the end break down the barrier between the sexes, and lead to an understanding that will be useful in their future life together. Such a relationship may make a girl less delicate in her speech and deportment, but in the larger issues of life, if she be sound at the core, it will do her no great damage. If she gains some of his coarseness she contributes to his refinement; if she loses some of her charm, she gains in intellectual honesty. So let us older ones assure ourselves that our boys and girls are in no danger of doing actual wrong, and then let us permit them to learn a little more about

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one another in the tests of good fellowship, which will eliminate the stress upon the sentimental and upon the sexual relationship which is the characteristic of the long engagement.

There is much talking and writing due to the Freudian philosophy ("that nasty old man," as a woman essayist calls him), and the realists of modern fiction are picking human nature to pieces, dwelling, because of the interest and profit of the undertaking, on the psychology of sex.

This has led us into strange and devious paths where our intelligent young people have ruthlessly followed, but the world has not been made one jot wiser by these investigations. The modern young gentleman fresh from college, even though he may have cherished disappointed pretensions to a Phi Beta Kappa, would very much rather be reading a good wholesome romance of blood letting than the studies of sex relationships that are handed out to him over the counters of the bookshops. What he likes best—this

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young man of to-day—is the two hundred yard drive down the green fairway, or the swish of a tennis ball. And the young woman who uses all of her feminine arts so skillfully indoors, finds in the athletic competitions with the young man of her acquaintance a sane judgment which gives her artistry or her 'sophistry a subordinate place in her accomplishments. It is the athletic young woman, whether she be an intellectual or no who will frankly discuss books dealing with sex and then comment upon them with much the same pungency as the lady essayist already mentioned.

2

Benedick and Beatrice, our norms, have been solidly but not elaborately educated. They have perhaps learned as much about life in the four years of their marriage as in all the years that preceded it. In the high school Beatrice learned what Benedick did. She would not have done this in other days when girls were permitted to skate carelessly over the Pierian spring, concealing their

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ignorance by a smattering of the arts which let them pass socially for something more cultured than they were. In her general knowledge (comparing very favorably with Benedick's) she possesses a source of happiness which he is clever enough to appreciate. He is not obliged to put his thoughts into small change and upon the topics of the day he finds that she has kept herself as well informed as he. As he looks about him, he discovers that his wife is quite as agreeable a companion as any of the young women of his acquaintance. In the five years that have passed Georgiana Smith has gone off terribly in her looks. Her loud laugh is perhaps less pronounced, but her other devices failing, she has become absurdly kittenish for a woman approaching thirty and titters inordinately. He wonders what Georgiana and her weary husband talk about when they are at home. And then the other girls that he used to know at one period of his bachelorhood, all possibilities for him—Julia, Annabelle, May, and Dolores. Julia's slen-

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derness has become skinny, and her long nose (a feature at which he had always looked askance) has a habit of prying into other people's affairs; Annabelle, the frail, pretty blonde who married a rich man, has become addicted to art and paints shocking pictures in the cubistic manner to hide the lamentable fact that she knows nothing whatever of the dignity or philosophy of the career that she has chosen. Her husband's friends buy these daubs and the rest of her artistic fraternity, in the hope of favors, tell her how good she is. But Benedick knows better. Annabelle was always evading the real tests of education and experience. He shudders as he remembers what a close thing it was for him, because violet eyes in the moonlight can be appealing. And May, the sprightly, the jubilant, the merry, who had a tendency to flesh, now weighs quite two hundred pounds and in her slow, bovine gaze shows the passing of all interest in anything that has not to do with eating. Of the four only Dolores still has the glance of allure-

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ment and intrigue. Dolores has never married. She was always a butterfly, and no man could catch her. But Benedick is glad that she proved so elusive, wondering why the expression of her face has grown so hard—a spoiled woman grown cynical. Beatrice, whatever her faults, is at least not that. Since the arrival of the new baby, Beatrice the second, a change has come over his wife. She has been again glorified with motherhood, and he knows that never again will she lead their path very far afield. She, too, has reached the reasonable conclusion that Benedick, after all, is a very much nicer sort of a person than any of the gay married men who used to make love to her. His instincts, she realizes, are of the better sort and she knows that with careful steering she can now guide their vessel upon a safe course. And why not? Should she deliberately choose a hazardous one? One would not by the use of false reasoning or fatuous experiment, run the risk of ruining one's health, or of damaging one's professional or

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business career. Then why not use the same care in the career of marriage? The gift of free will to the human race which raised beings above the level of automatons brought with it the responsibility for a proper discrimination. And in marriage two free wills are in operation only to be brought into concord by a community of interest which helps to make their achievements doubly secure.

Of course both Benedick and Beatrice have their irritating moments. Benedick, being a pipe smoker, is likely to scatter tobacco and ashes about the house—upon the rug in the parlor especially. He says in extenuation of his failing that “it keeps the moths out.” He puts his feet upon the furniture, but the threat of an upholsterer’s bill is usually sufficient to bring an end to that habit. He has, too, still a tendency to take a nap in the evenings or to go to bed at ten o’clock, and read.

Beatrice likes to “fuss around” at night, for women, like children, never like to go to

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bed at night or to get up in the morning. She has, it seems, a number of things to do, the reasons for which are not apparent to Benedick, who washes his teeth, says his prayers (if he is wise), and tumbles into bed with all speed. But these feminine idiosyncrasies are easily to be borne, for Benedick, reading a while, falls to sleep over his book, which Beatrice gently removes and finishes her toilet for bed at her leisure.

At last they understand each other and are, in fact, so accustomed to each other's habits of action and thought that what began in tolerance now ends in a real affection, for her habits are a part of his life and his of hers. They learn, too, that having rounded the little rough edges of their life, all the more important matters readily adjust themselves. They find that the selective instinct that first brought them together had been based upon something more tangible than chance. For the things that they liked to do before they were married, their taste for music, for reading, for the theater,

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are still to be relied upon, and more surely now since their larger income permits them to be gratified.

Beatrice always played very prettily upon the piano the simpler things of Mendelssohn and Chopin, and, as the occasion required it, dance music for her friends, or accompaniments for Benedick, who sang ballads from popular operettos in a throaty baritone. There were tremendous possibilities in this community of taste, though it had taken Beatrice some years to discover them. A woman with a talent for music which she indulges seriously can never be greatly at a loss and with a new piano and lessons from a good teacher, the whole of a new magical world, once seen in glimpses, is now spread before her—Beethoven, Bach and the moderns, with their provocative suggestion of uncomprehended meanings, almost, but never quite, revealed. Benedick does not understand the moderns. Chopin and Beethoven are quite good enough for him, but she tells him that he has “an old ear” and

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kisses it skillfully which means that he is "an old dear." So that he resolves that he will follow her culture to the very doors of the madhouse.

But he exacts in return, her appreciation of the masters of painting of the day, for Benedick has always felt that if he had not been an advertising man he would have been a landscape painter. It is perhaps wise to leave him under this delusion, for Benedick, in spite of his nice taste in the planning and arrangement of advertising drawings, is gregarious by inclination, a born business man and accustomed to regular hours and three "square" meals a day. But he knows something of the laws of color and has an understanding of the work of modern men who make the management of light their problem. It all very interesting to Beatrice, who goes with her husband to the exhibitions, absorbing culture like a new sponge.

It is thus with women. Creatures of imagination, they devote themselves with curious intensity to any daydream that

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happens to possess them. Give their dream substance and they will follow it as avidly as they would the wildest vagary of their discontent. And however small their definite creative accomplishments they are in spirit, at least, finer artists than men. So any form of culture that does not interfere with their duties to their homes and children is to be encouraged by their husbands, who must be made to comprehend that women think with their feelings which must be constantly engaged upon some worthy cause as an alternative to the introspection which leads to danger.

3

It might be interesting to compare the points of view of Benedick and Beatrice, in this period of readjustment, with those of the earlier stages of their married life. The cook, let us say, has left, for this under any circumstances is no unusual event. Benedick comes home from town weary and ready for a good dinner. He whistles when

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he comes in. Beatrice answers him from the kitchen, where he catches her in an apron in the overt act of frying a steak.

"Hello! Has the cook left?" he says, looking around.

She smiles calmly.

"I told you that if she suggested cup custard or floating island for dessert again, I would brain her with a saucepan. But I didn't. I merely asked her if she couldn't think of something else. She was on her dignity at once. 'I guess you want a chef' she said, and went and got her clothes. She was only a plain cook—"

"God knows she was plain enough," says Benedick feelingly.

"But Mary can't cook. It's up to me. I've burnt my finger already."

"How damned silly!"

She looks at him and laughs.

"Are you hungry?"

"Ravenous. Do you want any help?"

"No, thanks. I'll be ready in ten minutes."

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You will observe that the situation is similar to an earlier one; that Benedick is tired and hungry; that Beatrice is hot and provoked; that Benedick for no reason in the world tells her that she is "damned silly." But she laughs and goes on cooking, because she knows that all men are brutes, and that Benedick is merely exercising his masculine prerogative in being rather decently brutal. Benedick is permitted to leave the kitchen under the burden of neither tears nor recriminations. For Beatrice has also learned the great truth that when a man comes home tired from his office, he is merely an animal to be fed and not reasoned with. She does not expect him to find and kiss the blister on her finger. If he did attempt to do so, she would probably suspect him at once of a flirtation with a stenographer at the office.

Conversations, counterparts of others fraught with disaster in the past, now pass into domestic history without being even written down by the recording angel.

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Serious matters are never the subject for serious disagreements, for in these as they both know their interests are common and their responsibilities are to be shared alike. It is always over unimportant incidents that they are least moderate in opinion and in language. For instance one morning Benedick gets up, and prepares for his bath. There is not a very good light in the bathroom and finding some water in the bathtub, he pulls up the stopper to let the water out, too sleepy to be aware of the fact that Beatrice the night before has transferred her pet goldfish, which seems to be ailing, for reinvigoration, from the aquarium to the bathtub. It is a pale goldfish, slightly anæmic and doubtless needing only a change of scene for complete recovery, but Benedick does not observe it until turning toward the tub again he sees it disappearing with a slight gurgle into the pipe. He utters an involuntary exclamation of dismay, and Beatrice with an awakening sense of disaster soon comes running.

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"My goldfish!" she exclaims excitedly. "What have you done with it?"

He assumes an ingenuous air as he spreads the lather on his face and examines himself steadfastly in the mirror.

"Goldfish!" he says with all the stoicism of a guilty conscience.

"Yes; yes," says Beatrice. "My gold fish. It was in the bathtub. You've let it go down."

"No! Not your goldfish?" he exclaims.

"Oh, how stupid of you? How cruel! I don't see how you could have done such a thing. Nobody but an idiot could look at a bathtub without seeing a goldfish in it."

She has called him an idiot before but he has never liked the word. He stiffens a little and takes up his safety razor.

"I've looked at many bathtubs," he says ironically, "and never seen goldfish in 'em."

"Really!" she replies in sarcasm. "Trust *you* to do a fool thing like that."

"Well, you know, Bee (scrape), when we

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married, I never bargained (scrape) to take my bath with a goldfish."

"Oh! You're intolerable!" she cries. "I could kill you."

This dire revenge for the fate of the unfortunate fish is luckily not to be, and Beatrice goes from the room to regain her composure, while Benedick cuts himself inadvertently upon the chin with the safety razor. But his conscience still troubles him, so he goes into the room where Beatrice is gazing gloomily at the untenanted aquarium.

"See," says Benedick to Beatrice, exhibiting the blood upon his chin, "fate has intervened. The goldfish is avenged."

"Don't be a fool," she replies acidly.

"I'm not a fool. I'm just sleepy. But I'm sorry. I've even attempted suicide with a safety razor. Now do be reasonable."

"Hmf! I think you did it on purpose. You never *did* like that goldfish."

"My dear, I adored him. I never knew a goldfish that I cared for half as much. But

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in future please advise me in advance when you propose using the bathtub as an aquarium. You shall have a new goldfish."

"Oh, do get your bath and *go!*"

It is the last word. He feels that Beatrice is entitled to it.

Here, you see, is a reasonably happy issue out of this affliction. There is a great appearance of turmoil in their contentions, but each is always quite certain that the tempest will not go beyond the confines of the teapot. When Benedick comes out in the evening he brings an enlarged goldfish which will not fit into the plumbing. And all is serene.

4

Curiously enough, Benedick and Beatrice have been carried through the hazardous period of their married life without mention of the importance of religion in the household. Perhaps we have assumed that Benedick and Beatrice as normal human beings could not have been normal without a faith

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in God, for, as Voltaire says, if there had been no God, man would have invented one. Perhaps the very seriousness of the subject suggested too heavy a responsibility. But it becomes more and more obvious that the responsibility cannot be evaded, for the marriage service, whether performed by priest, minister, or magistrate, is not a mere formula or a social function but an oath before God, Who by the spoken words of the parties to the contract becomes the Supervisor of their destinies. Any attempt to evade this issue fails. It may be denied that marriage is a sacrament. It may be asserted that marriage is a social custom, a conventional and respectable expedient of two persons of opposite sex who desire to live together. But the oath remains. God remains. He is a witness to the contract.

The materialism of the age, the challenge of science, the irresponsibility of intelligent and leisurely people by whom one is surrounded, all conspire to convince the very young that it is no sin to move along the

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lines of least resistance, which means a total neglect of spiritual affairs in the new home. This is, of course, no place for a discussion of Evolution versus Exodus or the validity of the claims of any sect or church. It is enough to recall the fact that duty to God is a part of the heritage of all people who profess Christianity and that that duty calls for something less indolent than the habits of the average household on Sunday morning. Prayer as a means of grace and self-communion can do much to awaken troubled minds to the real remedy for their difficulties, because, in prayer, if it be sincere, self is for the moment forgotten and one learns something of the true meaning of love, of friendship, of loyalty in relation to God and one's neighbor. (Calmness comes with it, reason and common sense, two valiant adversaries of jealousy and intolerance.)

It has been asserted that women are more intelligent than men and that their spiritual qualities are much more highly developed. This of course accounts for the presence of

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women in the congregations of our churches, while their husbands are playing golf. Men are not trained to think in terms of the spiritual. God is a vague abstraction to them, Christ an enigma. They believe in Christ as much as they can believe in any enigma, arguing that when so many wise men disagree they can afford to await until death the answer to the controversy. Women have a finer sense of their responsibilities and a greater courage in defending their convictions. Most men have few religious convictions worth being courageous for. And so, were it not for their women, their households would be as Godless as they.

Beatrice, who has only gone at irregular intervals to church since she has been married, comes down from the nursery where she has been helping at the toilet of Beatrice the second, and calmly announces that the house of Benedick is Godless, that she is going to church and that Benedick is going with her. Benedick looks up at her over the newspaper propped against a sugar bowl.

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Her tone is playfully confident, forestalling his refusal.

"Why?" he asks.

"Because—" she replies, giving him many reasons, the chief of which are that he is a heathen, and that the children will in time become heathens also.

"But there's plenty of time for that."

"No, Benny dear, we are going to church to-day. It's winter. There's no golf. You have no excuse."

"What on earth has struck you?"

"Don't ask foolish questions. I've decided to be good and I don't propose to go to heaven unless you go too."

The ice is broken. He sees the validity of her argument, and goes. In church he is critical but his mind is aroused. He becomes interested, if only in his own negations. Then later interested in the answers to them. He reads. He and Beatrice argue. The parson calls. He is a good fellow, a muscular Christian who beats Benedick one spring afternoon at golf.

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Any man who can beat Benedick at golf is worth listening to. The spiritual contact is established, but it is Beatrice who has made this possible.

It may appear from their conversations that Beatrice has the dominant character. Perhaps she has. Marriage is often successful when the woman is dominant, provided that she does not let her husband become aware of the fact. And if the woman's instincts are true to her traditions, her spiritual qualities will bring the pair safely out of many an awkward misunderstanding. To dominate is not to domineer, a distinction worth studying by many husbands of our acquaintance. Some women thrive under the methods of the stone age. Some women need them for the good of their souls. But the customs of the cave man may not be safely used with the sort of women who are worth while, the women of spirit and courage who are quite justified in their methods of retaliation.

But true marriage is the marriage of mind

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and body, brought to a safe consummation by unity of taste and ideals and inspired by a generous affection, which in its unselfishness partakes of some of the qualities of sacrifice of divinity itself.

5

Statistics may apply to one set of individuals and not to another, and conclusions drawn from human experience can only be used as a guide, like the automobilist's blue book to direct him by certain landmarks toward his destination. Automobile drivers differ. A chicken crossing the road (and this is a habit of chickens) may make him oblivious of the "small red schoolhouse, 11½ miles" and throw him completely astray in his calculations, leading him and his companion into some blind alley or into the mud from which he may with difficulty extricate himself. There is, too, the danger that the blue book, like this present one, may not be up to date and that since its publication the old landmarks have been torn down and

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new ones erected. But human nature changes little from generation to generation and is only slightly affected by the changes in social customs and the influences of environment.

What general conclusions, then, can be drawn from the married life of Benedick and Beatrice?

First: That success in marriage, like success in any other human relationship, rests most securely upon a basis of good will, decency and understanding.

Second: That the hazards in marriage are no greater than the hazards in celibacy, in business, or in any walk of life.

Third: That love, being composed of a great many uncertain elements, is a good love if it be largely friendship; a bad love if too largely passion.

Fourth: That happiness is just a sprightly synonym for contentment. That the search for pleasure in vague excitements is a spurious imitation of happiness.

Fifth: That men and women must be

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constantly occupied in useful acts to keep them from performing foolish ones.

Sixth: That "in-laws" are singularly tactless persons whose shortcomings must be overlooked as one overlooks one's nose.

Seventh: That God's name being invoked in the marriage service, marriage is a prayer instead of a social function.

Eighth: That in a number of cases divorce is the resort of the egotist and the "quitter."

Ninth: That if there were more double beds, there would be fewer double lives.

Tenth: That marriage, like life, is a science to be studied with diligence and practiced with care.

These observations may invoke comment—especially from the divorced, but this book is not written for them. They could, if they chose, probably write one much more exciting and interesting. But such a book would be a warning, containing, in all probability, much material that would be very alarming to those on the point of undertak-

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ing the adventure. In conclusion, it might be added that proper prohibition (ugly word) be placed upon the issuance of marriage licenses to irresponsible pairs; that banns be published; that marriage laws be made uniform in all the states and drawn preferably by judges of divorce courts; that marrying-ministers be put to death and acquisitive magistrates sent into political oblivion.

But this is not a textbook (though one might be written). It is an Allegory—with Sloughs of Despond and Castles Perilous blithely passed and won. And yet who would not dare the venturing? There are many Benedicks and Beatrices to answer that.

(1)

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